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*Samuel Taylor Coleridge*

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# SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

AND THE

## ENGLISH ROMANTIC SCHOOL.

By ALOIS BRANDL,

PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, GERMAN  
UNIVERSITY OF PRAGUE.

ENGLISH EDITION BY LADY EASTLAKE.

*(Assisted by the Author.)*

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Gratefully Dedicated

TO

PROFESSOR JACOB SCHIPPER.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.



IF Coleridge at this day is not quite unknown in the country whose influence on the intellectual life of England he, with Carlyle, did most to promote, the merit is due before all to Freiligrath, the editor of the Tauchnitz edition of his poems, and the author of a masterly translation of the "Ancient Mariner"; to Gervinus, who in his work on Shakespeare gave copious quotations from Coleridge's critical notes; and to Brandes, who in the 'Hauptströmungen der Literatur des 19<sup>ten</sup> Jahrhunderts' has given us a kind of instantaneous photograph of Coleridge's poetical, political, and theological activity.

The difficulty, especially for a foreigner, of duly describing so many-sided a man, is one on which I have never entertained the slightest self-deception. His life is rich in psychological problems. As a poet he presented in a period of formal school-prescription

an example of inspired genius, in which, nevertheless, we have to see nothing marvellous, but merely the natural working of cause and effect. Those, further, who would investigate the sources of his æsthetic and theological opinions must feel their way through a very labyrinth of English, Greek, and German writings. At the same time he stood in the closest connection with the great events of the age. In his hopes, fears, and efforts the outbreak and collapse of the French Revolution are reflected—the wars of Napoleon, and that of German Independence—the rise of Socialism, and the first triumphs of Liberalism.

This task is one which I have undertaken almost against my will. At first I only intended to trace in a single essay the influence of the German school of literary criticism on that of England, which is practically that of Coleridge. But the Essay on his Collective Philosophy soon grew into a volume. And this in its turn struck me as so fragmentary, one-sided, and even as so unjust, that I felt myself bound to attack also the life and the poetry. I fared like the Wedding Guest in the “Ancient Mariner.” The first impression took me captive; I could not escape without a glance at the whole, and I was compelled to hear the tale to the last word.

On the other hand, to undertake the life of the man without interweaving a history of his literary development, although usual in England, and still frequent with us, I felt to be not less out of the question. For such

a limited scheme would, to my feeling, have deprived the story of its point. A poet, as a rule, interests us not because he has gone through this and that, but because he has written this and that. His personality, it is true, comes first, and his natural and acquired character must always be kept in view, but his art is the final end in which all its successes and reverses culminate; all therefore that he has derived from particular predecessors, all that he has inherited from universal tradition, is necessarily included in the picture. Not only are the events of his life to be brought into consistent connection, but every important work by him, whether in prose or verse, has to be compared with those of the same class which have preceded it—either by himself or by some acknowledged teacher. Thus only can a dilettante history of literary men be converted into a scientific history of literature.

The outward evidence of such research I have, on the other hand, as far as possible dispensed with. My authorities are only briefly indicated; for all who care to go further can hardly avoid referring to Alibone's 'Dictionary of English Literature,' where the full titles are given. I mention here, once for all, the slight biography included in Pickering's edition, as well as that by Ingleby and Ashe.

Both in Germany and England I have received the most kind assistance. Above all am I indebted to Lord Coleridge. No sooner did he hear of my undertaking than he not only made over to me the requisite

family papers, but with the utmost kindness himself became my guide at Ottery St. Mary. Without his help and without also the unique liberality of the British Museum—chiefly through the intervention of Dr. Garnett, the Keeper of Printed Books—the present work could hardly have been possible. From the Imperial Court Library at Vienna, and from the University Libraries of Vienna and Prague I have also derived all the help in their power.

To Mr. Hunter, late librarian of Dr. Williams's Library, I am indebted for access to the documents deposited there by Mr. Crabb Robinson, which still contain many a grain of gold not included in the well-known edition. Dr. Edward Schroeder, now Professor at Berlin—formerly at Göttingen,—had the kindness, in spite of pressing occupation, to search the Göttingen records for me. To the Rev. Travers Herford, B.A., I am indebted for copying the Spinoza glosses in University Hall, London; to the Rev. Mr. Lee, the Superior, and to Mr. Lockhart, the Steward of Christ's Hospital, for interesting particulars; to Mr. Watts, Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, for the same; and finally, for sympathetic help in the philosophical portions to my esteemed colleague Professor Frederic Iodl.

As regards the special conditions of English thought, I found various friends ever ready to enlighten me *vivâ voce*. I need only name Dean Church, Canon Liddon,

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Professor Drummond, Miss Toulmin Smith, Dr. Frederick Furnivall, Mr. C. H. Herford, M.A., Dr. James Syme, and Mr. Henry Sweet, M.A. Nor can I ever forget numerous other instances of kind help which I have experienced, though I refrain from enumerating them further.

A. B.

*Innsbruck, August 1886.*

Finally I take up the pen again to express my gratitude to Lady Eastlake, the most kind and skilful originator of this English edition, which is in one respect even superior to the German, as it contains the original words of all the quotations.

A. B.

*Innsbruck, March 25th, 1887.*





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# LIFE OF COLERIDGE.



## CHAPTER I.

### CHILDHOOD AND BOYHOOD. (1772-90.)

“The future seraph in my mortal frame.”  
—*To an Infant.*

Birth and Parentage—A Strange Childhood—Christ’s Hospital—Discipline and Diet—Rev. James Boyer—The Boy rheumatic—Wishes to be a Shoemaker—Imitates Leander—Studies Plato and Plotinus—Earliest Verses—School-fellows—Charles Lamb—Gift of Talk—French Revolution—Pantheistic Ideas—His only just Punishment—Ode on the Destruction of the Bastille—Monody on Chatterton—English Landscape School—Bowles—Leaves Christ’s Hospital.

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE was born on the 21st October, 1772,—a critical time in the world’s history. This was the period when the three Powers first combined for the partition of Poland; when France, under the rule of the aged Louis XV., and he under that of Madame Dubarry, had sunk to the lowest stage of irresponsible government; when England, represented by an obsequious Parliament, debated how best to impose a system of taxation on her American colonies; and even when, what seems now strangest of all, English

vessels took the lead as the keenest slave-traders on the high seas. To this state of high-handed policy the literature of the day opposed a strong counter-current. The letters of Junius roused the minds of English patriots; the 'Confessions' of Rousseau exposed in coarsest colours the artificial conventions of French social life; while in Germany the writings of Lessing and Goethe contributed to set in motion the irresistible storm and stress of reactionary feeling which overran the world. The Revolution was in the air, and Coleridge, both as poet and thinker, was stirred in his deepest soul by it.

The little town of Ottery St. Mary was his birthplace. Both native British and ancient Roman remains abound in that locality. In the old city of Exeter Saxon inhabitants had manfully resisted the Norman invaders; while many a brilliant adventurer such as Drake and Raleigh was born in that neighbourhood. In the old vicarage on this historic ground the future poet first saw the light, being cradled next an old Gothic stone fire-place, which still exists, and within view of the weather-beaten pointed arches of the fine old church of St. Mary.

His father, John Coleridge, a remarkable and self-made man, was descended from a family of simple wool-dealers in the town of South Molton, but, like the middle class of the eighteenth century in general, he contrived—in spite of adverse fortune—to raise himself to considerable intellectual eminence. The bankruptcy of his

father drove the penniless boy into the streets, whence he was rescued by a benevolent patron, and before he was twenty a poor girl married him. For all that, he managed to go, or be sent, to Cambridge, where he studied hard, and took Holy Orders. From 1760 he held the Vicarage of Ottery St. Mary, and conducted the Free Grammar-school. On the death of his wife he married again, and, with narrow means and the gout in his system, realised the difficulty of providing for a rapidly increasing family. But, though never free from the cares of life, his resources were equal to them. If preaching and teaching were the duties of his profession, teaching, at all events, was the delight of his heart. He accordingly set up a private academy next door to the Grammar-school, undertook about twenty boarders, pushed them on in Latin and Greek as far as Aristophanes and Euripides, and gave them mathematics, astronomy, and French in addition—all for the sum of sixteen guineas a year. He also found time in his double capacity of pastor and master to publish various works, theological and philosophical; never omitting, as in duty bound, to make them the advertisements for his own school. Nor could he be accused of neglecting his own children, or the souls of his parishioners; indeed, his enthusiasm in the service of the last-named bordered on the ridiculous, for he would occasionally quote the Bible to the poor labourers in what he believed to be the original Hebrew, so that they might hear, as he thought, the very words used by the Holy Spirit.

In the year of Samuel's birth he wrote a 'Critical Latin Grammar,' for the purpose of simplifying the rules for the use of his pupils—one suggestion being to exchange the names of the cases for terms of greater significance; for example, that of the ablative, for "the quale-quare-quidditive case"; while, under the delusion that it would interest the unfortunate victims, he appended to it a tremendously learned treatise on the origin of the Latin alphabet. A certain grotesque conscientiousness thwarted his best intentions. He recognised the sanctity of earthly duties, and exerted himself honestly to fulfil them; though generally carried away by fits of absence and total ignorance of the world into oblivion of them. All who knew him, appreciated the rectitude and disinterestedness of his character. Many of the neighbouring gentry subscribed regularly for his books, sent their children to his school, and sought his acquaintance; and the Bishop of Exeter invited him to his table. For all that, his books remained unread—even uncut—and many an anecdote circulated at his expense. Leaving home once for a few days, his wife placed a neat bundle in his knapsack, adding, "Mind you put on a clean shirt every day." On his return she found the knapsack empty. He had obeyed her literally as to donning the clean shirt, but had omitted to take off the dirty one. He was a strange being, and it is no wonder that his son, though looking back upon him with the tenderest respect, should have compared him to Parson Adams—equally as apt to lose himself in the clouds.



The economical cares of the family weighed chiefly upon the mother, by name Anne Bowden, but the good woman's back was suited to the burden. Her ancestors, from the time of Queen Elizabeth, had been small landholders in Exmoor, and her soul was not above her descent. Not that she was without education. Her signature is firm and free, though evidently not called often into requisition. As far as can be judged, she possessed a sound understanding, and she looked up to her husband with all the reverence due to his profession. What a healthy appetite for work appears in the tone with which she used to warn her marriageable sons against "your harpsichord young ladies!" Nor could there be any doubt of the courage of the woman who undertook to marry the unpractical vicar, already the father of three children. And this courage was needed more and more, as she presented him year after year with fresh olive-branches, till they numbered no less than ten—one daughter, and nine sons in addition,—for whom, however, they managed to provide in a highly respectable fashion. Two sons entered the church, three the army, one was a medical man, two died young, while the hero of our tale, who was the youngest, cannot, in a practical and worldly sense, be said to have afforded her much satisfaction. From her he inherited his homely and unconventional habits, from his father the fatal gift of transcendental aims. As long as he belonged to the nursery he was her favourite, but once full-grown, he fell low in her esteem. This became laughably apparent on

one occasion, when, after a long absence, during which he had reaped considerable literary fame, he returned to Ottery. This was in 1799, by which time his mother had become too deaf to hear what was going on; yet, as he engaged in a lively argument with his brothers, she was so convinced that Samuel must be in the wrong, that she exclaimed, "Oh, if your poor father had been alive, he would soon have convinced you!"

The tone which prevailed in the family was a truly English mixture of freedom of thought and submission to authority. The Rev. John Coleridge was apt to consider the Holy Scriptures from a poetical point of view. In his 'Miscellaneous Dissertations on chapters xvii. and xviii. of the Book of Judges,' he endeavoured to explain prophetic visions on physiological principles, as attributable to a temporary suspension of bodily consciousness. At the same time, far from doubting any portion of the Scriptures, he gave, as in duty bound, every prophecy and miracle his unqualified subscription. As regards the literature of the day, he detested the measured, insipid, rhetorical, pseudo-classical correctness of the school of Pope. According to a sentence in his grammar, "Artificial rules hamper a great genius. A soaring mind will wear no shackles." At the same time he defended this view by pointing to great classical examples. He appealed to the metrical liberties taken by Homer and Virgil, and quoted Longinus—"The sublime is born with man, and cannot be taught." He chose a similar middle-course in politics. He did not

hesitate to denounce the fratricidal war with America, soon after its outbreak, from the pulpit. So earnest and overpowering were his words, that, by the desire of his congregation, the sermon was printed. With a side glance, at its close, at the government of the day, he uttered the warning, "May a spirit of mercy and righteousness govern our State." At the same time, no revolutionary idea ever entered his head. He was a loyal subject of his sovereign. He repudiated all such modern writers as Rousseau, with his fiction of a prehistoric contract between a People and their Ruler. Government in his eyes was not so much a human as a Divine institution; War, not only a diplomatic folly, but the judgment of the Most High on the wickedness of the age. "Lead godly lives, and the Almighty will grant you peace." Two opposing tides—healthy enlightenment and a mystical faith—crossed and recrossed each other in his mind; the rationalistic spirit of the eighteenth century contending perpetually with an ever active imagination. No father more likely to be succeeded by such a son could well have existed.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge showed from his earliest years an astonishing capacity. At three years of age he read a chapter of the Bible, and entered the Grammar-school. At six years of age—the year of Voltaire's and Rousseau's death—he joined the lowest Latin class. He was a prodigy; all the old women in Ottery agreed on that point, and he agreed with them also, and went his own peculiar way. While his brothers were romping

out of doors, he was sitting by his mother, reading the legends of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-killer, the Arabian Nights, conquering or begging with Belisarius, or wandering with Robinson Crusoe on desert islands in dread of cannibals. He played but seldom, and then generally alone; chiefly acting such scenes as he had read. With a little stick he decapitated weeds and nettles, and fancied himself one of the "Seven champions of Christendom." At most he admitted his one sister into his confidence, who rambled with him over hill and dale. We shall find these pleasant recollections reflected in his earliest poems. Instead of joining in active sports with other boys, the little fellow lived in dreams, and soon nothing was too strange or monstrous for him to believe.

On the other hand, no attempt on his father's part to point out the different planets, and explain their marvellous mass and distance, excited his astonishment. His head ran upon ghosts. As he lay ill of some childish but infectious ailment, he wondered why no Lady Northcote of that day came to see him. "The four Guardian Saints (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) who stand round my bed are not afraid of catching the fever." His delusions at length became so strong as to alarm his father, and his ghost and witch stories were banished. Alluding later to this time in letters to friends, Coleridge admitted that, though simple and innocent as a child, he had none of childhood's thoughts and habits. He possibly exaggerated his own infantine

oddities, for with increasing years he rather coveted and assumed childlike ways. Poets are the least trustworthy of autobiographers; and Coleridge of all poets, with his mystical vein, his feverish imagination, and his tendency to view all things with the inward, rather than the outward eye, lived habitually in a world of visions. They raised him, it is true, above the commonplaces of life, but also occasionally let him down to earth in rather humiliating fashion.

The death of his father (1781) roused the child rather roughly from his dreams. The apparently robust man died from a stroke, at the age of sixty-two. The mother remained in Ottery till her own death, in 1809; but the vicarage had to be vacated. The brother George offered to carry on the education of the boy, but was bound meanwhile for Oxford, where three years later he took his degree. So the family broke up; when a former and grateful pupil of the old vicar's—a member of one of the best families in the neighbourhood, Sir Francis Buller—obtained him a presentation to Christ's Hospital School in London. Thither the future poet was transferred, at the beginning of May 1782, not quite ten years of age. The woods of Ottery were clothing themselves with tenderest green when he entered the grey, busy city, "where I saw naught lovely save sky and stars." Separated thus from the paternal nest, "ere my soul had fixed her fond domestic loves," he had yet lived too idyllic a life in the country ever to turn into a townsboy; and in tracing his further development, it must

always be borne in mind, as an important factor, that from the time he became a school-boy, he no longer knew to what spot on this earth he properly belonged.

Eight years did he remain at Christ's Hospital, even, as it appears, during the holidays. The first ten weeks after coming to London, he spent with a compassionate uncle, who took him from one coffee-house to another—exhibited him to all his acquaintance—and finished the spoiling of the strange child. The more painful was the contrast, when, on the 17th July, the ancient gates of the old monastery closed behind him. Suddenly confronted here with the stern side of life, his genius put forth its first tender growth under the hardest conditions; and how these conditions acted upon him, is the chief question of his boyhood.

Originally a Franciscan convent, the school had preserved a number of the ascetic traditions of its foundation. The costume of the boys consisted, as it still consists, in a dark blue monk-like coat, with a leather girdle, yellow stockings, a white tie, and bare head. The diet also was of monkish frugality. Breakfast consisted of a slice of bread, a wooden bowl of thin beer (further diluted with water from an unsavoury leathern jug); for dinner, meat only every other day; for supper, a little milk, with bread and cheese or butter. The dishonesty of the servants intensified the austerity. Baskets full of food were surreptitiously conveyed outside the gates, and the stately steward winked at the petty larcenies (Lamb's 'Essays'). The small portion of meat was often

so tough, or so burnt, as to defy the sharpest hunger; and those unfortunate boys who were not supplemented by supplies from home, remained unsatiated. Coleridge, it is true, had his vain old uncle, who at first invited him to dine on holidays, but was soon ashamed of the blue coat and the yellow stockings. In his own words, "Our appetites were damped, not satisfied. Only once a week had we enough to eat, which was on a Wednesday, when the *ménu* consisted of rice milk and bread and butter." Nor was there any adequate provision for cleanliness—the scholars slept two in a bed, and four or five washed in the same basin; till an epidemic of sore eyes broke out. The clean towels which hung upon the beds were only intended for the eyes of some unforeseen visitors, and were the laughing-stock of the boys. At the same time, no real convent could well have exacted more observance of religion; prayers morning and evening, before and after meals, with the regular services of the Sunday, and frequently extra ones in the week; all church attendance being strictly supervised by steward and matron. This discrepancy between their exaction of outward piety on the part of the boys, and the known laxity of their own practices, was too obvious to escape notice, and whenever the lesson of the unjust steward was read, all the young eyes turned towards the well-known delinquents. At the same time, the mediæval flagellations which the good Franciscans had voluntarily endured as a religious exercise, were so ruthlessly practised on the helpless orphans, as to induce

a secret insubordination and a distaste for religion, against which, some years later, the presiding Committee instituted a regular mission in the form of an additional evening sermon.

Discipline under these circumstances was upheld by substantial methods. The masters flogged, the monitors flogged, and the beadles flogged. The superintendent of the dormitories would haul half-a-dozen boys at a time out of their beds on the coldest nights for the slightest disturbance, and flog them. Even the elder boys thought nothing of knocking a younger boy down who might come in their way. The punishments were too often unjust, but no complaint was of any use. For a boy who ran away, imprisonment and the leather strap were the award. As late even as 1877, a poor deserter, who knew his fate, committed suicide, and thus gave rise to a correspondence in the *Times*, which brought fearful revelations to light.

On the other hand, there were certain features calculated to stimulate the pride of the young pensioners. Christ's Hospital was the largest Institution of the kind in the country, and its history has since been celebrated by many a pen. The transformation of the convent into a school for orphan boys was the act of the orphan King, Edward VI. His portrait and his armorial bearings adorn the building, and from his time the blue-coats, during their short fortnight's holiday, in order to inspire them with a sense of the nation's great past, have had the right of free entry to the Tower, to West-



minster Abbey, and to St. Paul's. The Lord Mayor in his civic procession at Easter was accompanied by them as pages, he gave them tea, and visited the school once a year. The stately building, the lofty windows, the spacious walls behung with old pictures, the large courts where they played ball,—all contributed to give an air of grandeur. The chief traffic from the West-end to the City rolled past in sight of them; telling of the work and pleasures of the Great World. No foundlings or sons of servants were admitted. A full third of the seven hundred scholars consisted, like Coleridge, of the sons of clergymen: he must have felt himself in a grand establishment. At the same time, a democratic indifference, as in other English public schools, to all distinctions of birth, and a certain *esprit de corps* prevailed in the little colony; together with a respect for ancient usages which extended even to the wooden plates and to the leathern beer-jug. The citizens in the streets showed the little blue-coats a good-humoured respect; they took willing advantage, also, of the right of admission in Lent to the public supper, in order to hear the anthems sung by the fresh young voices. On St. Matthew's day they came in crowds to see the distribution of prizes, and listened with the smile of ignorance to the Greek declamation. But the most imposing ceremony was on occasion of the death of a boy, when all the scholars gathered together by night in the court of the hospital-quarter, and with torches in their hands, and singing psalms, passed slowly through the sounding

cloisters as they followed the coffin. A hardy body and devout soul were the two objects in view, and had they been sought by honest and loving means, many an orphan boy with but scanty prospects in life might have had cause to bless Christ's Hospital.

The teaching varied according to talent and choice of calling. The new boy was first sent to the "reading school" at Hertford, twenty miles from London, where, with three hundred little comrades, he learnt the rudiments of education. Coleridge was only six weeks at Hertford, being obviously too forward for this initiatory class. He then came to the central division, where he was given his choice of the writing school, as preparatory for a commercial career; of the mathematical school, as fitting boys for the navy; or the grammar school. As son of a clergyman, he preferred the last, where in the lowest class he found himself with about 150 companions in misfortune under a tolerably lenient master. The Rev. Mr. Field was rather a lady's man, of dandyish manners, with somewhat of the pretensions of a *bel-esprit*, having written a drama called "Vertumnus and Pomona," which, however, was pronounced to be too classical in style to be acted. He showed himself late of a morning, and withdrew early in the evening, even leaving the boys sometimes a whole day to themselves. Under such teaching two years were required before they mastered the "verba deponentia." With inexhaustible patience he heard the lessons of his class. He used the cane gently, and with an expression as if he

were taking medicine. There was not much to be gained from him, and Coleridge, with his precocious powers, soon outstript this tedious course. One of the elder boys—Thomas Middleton—charged, according to the rule of the school, with the superintendence of the younger ones, found him one day, during play-time, sitting in a corner with “points undressed” (untied garters), and shoes down at heel; as much buried in Virgil as if it had been a novel. He reported this to the head master, who forthwith promoted the boy (1783) to his own higher class.

The Rev. T. Boyer—Coleridge’s spelling of the name as Bowyer, in his ‘*Biographia Literaria*,’ is not confirmed in any contemporary document—was a man of robust common-sense; the very opposite, and proud to be so, to his flimsy, dandified colleague; to whom he occasionally hinted in a quiet way the small estimation in which he held him. Short and stout, with cruel little eyes, dressed in grey stockings and a close-fitting black clerical coat, from the overshort sleeves of which protruded the big hands, always, as it were, ready for execution, his whole system consisted in a tyrannical and even barbarous severity. With him it rained blows. He had a way of holding his victim by the chin and pinching his ear till the blood came (Leigh Hunt’s ‘*Autobiography*’). And as often as not it was mere ill-temper that guided his acts. The anecdotes of his two wigs—the one smooth, the other all tangle—by which, according to Lamb, a better or a worse day might

be anticipated, were not without foundation. Against Coleridge, with his black hair and large frame, this pleasant master had a particular grudge; and many an extra cut was dealt "because you are such an ugly fellow" (Gillman's 'Life of Coleridge'). Also, perhaps, because a lad at once so gifted and so absent in mind seemed to require more than common rousing. Those who sow unkindness reap hatred. The boy took an intense aversion to the brutal tyrant, which he never could quite throw off. "Old Jemmy Boyer is gone at last," wrote Lamb in 1814; "bury your animosity in the grave." And in spite of the tribute which Coleridge paid to the man's understanding, in his 'Biographia Literaria,' the stern old preceptor often haunted his dreams.

It is fair to say that the man was stern to himself as well. He was punctual to a moment in his class, and never overlooked a word or an inflexion. The School Committee paid him great respect, and his class, by name "Deputy Grecians," about forty in number, attained, through many a shiver and a sigh, a superiority of knowledge in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew, translated the New Testament extempore, repeated Homer, Virgil, and Horace by heart, and composed verses in hexameters and Pindaric odes. The arts and sciences were neglected, and only once a week was a day given to mathematics; not every boy knew his multiplication table, or anything about History; but these were deficiencies which lay in the plan of instruction, and not in Mr. Boyer. He sought, on the contrary, with all his power to remedy

them. Especially did he do his best to initiate his scholars in the merits of the national literature, and thus early helped to imbue young Coleridge with something more than a mere dilettante judgment in poetry.

It was Boyer also who represented to the Committee, in 1784, the advantage it would be if the study of English Grammar were included in the course of education, and accordingly it was so arranged. Three years later he petitioned afresh. His pupils had ample time if they only had access to them, to study the standard English writers, which, in his own words, "would insensibly improve their hearts and judgment, and accustom them to disdain the ordinary trifling compositions, which tend only to vitiate both." For this object he had already collected fifteen guineas from former pupils, and now entreated the Committee to add to the little fund, and a vote of five guineas a year for that purpose was granted. The new books made their appearance in the class about the same time as Coleridge himself. Judging by the works thus obtained, it is evident that Mr. Boyer partook of the so-called classical taste. The catalogue of the library printed in 1884 contains no work by Spenser, Daniel, Percy, Chatterton, Cowper, or Burns; but only the series of the English pseudo-classics, published by Bell in 1777-92, from Cowley and Milton down to Gray and Churchill, with their lives by Dr. Johnson, as well as his "corrected" Shakespeare. Critical works on Poetry were confined to the 'Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,' by H. Blair.

Freedom of fancy and romantic flights were evidently not to Mr. Boyer's taste, which was apparently as dictatorial and pedantic as himself; while the foot-rule always in his pocket furnished a further standard of his mind. Above all things, he required correctness from a poet, and forbade all ornamental flights. He thus taught the lad—as Coleridge gratefully acknowledges in his '*Biographia Literaria*'—to esteem the simplicity of Homer and Shakespeare far above the rhetoric of Virgil or Milton, and Virgil again higher than the fustian of modern Latinity. He stormed when he heard his scholars declaim such a story as that of Alexander and Clytus in the same monotonous pompous manner, whether intended as a warning against pride, anger, or drunkenness: and smiled when they ridiculed the artificial bombast of modern sonneteers. On the other hand, woe to them if they ventured to introduce any mythological common-places into their school verses. "Muse, boys! Muse! Your Nurse's daughter, you mean!" "Pierian fountain! Yes—the pump in the courtyard!" Classicality was mingled in him with common-sense—the real characteristic of the Johnsonian time.

On religious questions Boyer was just as orthodox; with a strong tendency to the same common-sense. He placed the '*Evidences of the Christian Religion*,' by Beattie, next to the rationalistic historical works of Gibbon and Hume. He belonged to the prosaic Utilitarian party which then prevailed in the Anglican Church, and which found its chief mouthpiece in Paley. Paley's '*Principles*

of Moral and Political Philosophy' took their place in the new library, and one of his scholars, C. B. Le Grice, some years later earned his literary spurs by an abstract of them.

These were the views with which Boyer did his best to imbue young Coleridge, whom he drilled for two years in the ranks of the "Deputy Grecians." He then, with right discernment, selected him to contend for the scholarship with which Christ's Hospital enabled its best men to enter the University. By this time Coleridge belonged to the higher class of "Grecians," and remained as such four years longer under Boyer's care and cane; forming, with three or four others of similar proficiency, a class by themselves. There was but little change in his mode of study, except that he read those more difficult writers who rank as the highest specimens of human culture—such as Tacitus, Demosthenes, and the Greek Tragedians, and also the Hebrew Psalter. But he gradually enjoyed far more freedom in choice of reading, in going out, and in assertion of opinion; and by this time the result of the severe training he had received in the Institution became apparent.

Not that his development had followed his own instinctive tendencies. On the contrary, he found himself in all respects driven rather in an opposite direction. Far also from becoming hardier in constitution, he was weaker. Others could stand the insufficient food; others could spend a whole holiday bathing in the New River; others could swim in their clothes, dry themselves in the sun,

and then return famished to the sparing supper, and be none the worse : but not so young Coleridge. He contracted a rheumatic habit, partly inherited from his father, which confined him for six months to the sick ward (1789). In point of ambition his desires appear to have been very humble. Had it depended only on himself, he would have become a shoemaker ; of the same order, it is true, as Jacob Böhme or Hans Sachs. He did offer himself as apprentice to a worthy of that craft in the neighbourhood, chiefly because he appeared to be good-natured, and his wife the same. The son of Crispin came to Boyer to know more about the young disciple, and was unceremoniously shown the door. How utterly the dry regular system which Boyer enforced in literary and philosophical studies was opposed to the fantastic ideal which filled his imagination, it would be impossible to say. But so strong an individuality yields to no external pressure, but rather follows its own lead the more stubbornly. As Coleridge met with no intelligent sympathy or helpful direction externally for his dreams, the more did he ponder on them internally. Often would he sit by the faintly glimmering fire-side, so immersed in thoughts of his old home, with its grey, drowsy church-tower, and its monotonous-sounding peal, "the poor man's only music," that at last it fell on his ear like "articulate sound of things to come." Often, too, in school he kept his eye apparently fixed with mock study on the ever-vanishing book, while his mind wandered away, and every time the door opened he expected to



see his sister or some well-known townsman enter. Or he lay on the leads, staring at the clouds as they sailed by; undisturbed by the noisy game of ball going on in the court below. Even in the street he would so far forget his surroundings, in recalling the feat of Leander, as to imitate, as if in sleep, the action of swimming. A gentleman passing by, with whose coat-tail pocket his hand, thus imaginarily employed, came in contact, seized him for a thief, but soon not only admitted his explanation, but took such a fancy to the boy as to subscribe for him to a circulating library. From that time Coleridge's range of books was no longer restricted—at least, as far as English works were concerned. Day by day he managed to steal out of the building and fetch two volumes, till he had read every book in the catalogue from A to Z.

Foremost in interest for him during the first years of his Grecian time was the study of the neo-platonic metaphysics. For many a year a Platonist had been held to be synonymous with a dreamer. People fancied themselves so enlightened under the teaching of Newton and Locke, as to believe they could dispense with the ancient intuitive ideas; and were so taken with the wealth of the new sciences in detail as no longer to understand the aspirations of simpler but loftier minds towards a more comprehensive whole. Few had the sagacity and courage to swim against the stream. One—not the least among these few—was William Taylor, called the Platonist, a warm-hearted, somewhat credulous thinker; who, in quiet retirement—encouraged and supported by a

small band of friends—devoted himself to the exposition and propagation of the wisdom of the ancients. It was in 1787 that he brought out a work, ‘Plotinus on the Beautiful,’ or a paraphrased translation of the ‘Enneade,’ I, book vi., which probably fell into the boy’s hands ; for at fifteen years of age, as he himself acknowledges, he entangled himself in its arguments. The original editions, or rather the Latin translations,—the latest of which dated from the beginning of the seventeenth century—must have been difficult of access for him, and hard of digestion. Taylor’s little book, however, was nigh at hand, and intelligibly written. The translator ridiculed in a flourishing introduction the shallowness of modern philosophy, which only swore by crucibles and air-pumps, and placed Plotinus, on the authority of his biographer, Porphyry, as a kind of phenomenon of “fourfold divinity,” who bade fair to discover the secret of the Egyptian and Eleusynian mysteries. What an attraction for a visionary school-boy ! If Plato had defined the essence of Beauty to consist in the harmonious relation of parts to each other, and of all to the whole, his post-Christian scholar added a further mystical element. All is beautiful, says Porphyry, which is in harmony with the Godhead ; not only form, but substance and parts also participate in this union. But the man who seeks the full and direct contemplation of the Beautiful, must throw off all carnal desires, forget all earthly cares, and feel himself, like Ulysses, an unwilling exile here below. “Seek to mount aloft in pure intellect, in perfection of

goodness, and in intuition of the Godhead." For the soul of a poet born to adore and to create Beauty, this form of creed was a real gospel. The lad thirsted for its truths, but saw himself only surrounded by rude and peevish menials, by grey walls, and smoking chimneys. There was nothing for it but sacrifice and self-denial. Thought, as we have seen by the Leander anecdote, had more reality for him than things. Willingly he overlooked the logical vagueness with which Plotinus, far more than Plato, asserts that the Beautiful is always seen in conjunction with the Good and the True. To the young thinker this represented the highest virtue and the fullest existence. After the dry teachings of Boyer, and of the modern Philosophy, these visionary ideas tasted like a pleasant antidote. His fancy took from that time a mystico-theological direction, which he never after entirely threw off; in so far remaining his life long a Platonist—or rather a Plotinist.

He had now shyly ventured a few poetical effusions. His first rhymes, at the beginning of his London time, were in the form of an ejaculatory prayer. They are wretched in every sense of the word, and a further proof that no royal road to excellence exists. To these succeeded—before he was fifteen—an important "fragment," which Freiligrath placed at the beginning of his admirable selection. It consists only of six iambic blank verses—plainly announcing for what branch of poetry he was pre-destined. "Ex ungue leonem." It was in the school of landscape imagery, where, inspired by the dis-

coveries of Newton and his followers, England had for more than a century developed her richest productiveness—descriptive in the hands of Denham, Thomson, Goldsmith, and Cowper; and lyrical in those especially of Milton and Gray. The soft beauty that surrounded Coleridge's native home had furnished him with the most vivid pictures. The gentle breezes which blow in changeful moods from the neighbouring coast—the tender light on the slow-flowing Otter—the thickets of willows which clothe the low ground—the outlines of the gently undulating hills,—with such reminiscences does his "First Advent of Love" abound, written before his fifteenth year :

"O fair is Love's first hope to gentle mind !  
As Eve's first star through fleecy cloudlet peeping ;  
And sweeter than the gentle south-west wind  
O'er willowy meads, and shadowed waters creeping,  
And Ceres' golden fields ;—the sultry hind  
Meets it with brow uplift, and stays his reaping."

It is all description, rendered in plaintive lyrical tones—like those of Milton in the "Penseroso," on which he has set his truest classic stamp, when describing the song of the nightingale—"sweetest, saddest." Milton's influence is even directly seen here: "The star of evening peeps through a fleecy cloudlet," like the moon in the "Penseroso;" though inclining more to that sense of the picturesque which his followers of the eighteenth century—especially Gray—had developed. When Coleridge speaks of his "own fair hope," with a sentimental sigh, as if man were only made for resignation, he adopts Gray's manner, not Milton's. We see all along, that

he keeps Milton in his eye, though attaching himself more to his contemporaries.

To return to Plotinism. No sooner known to him than it gave his poetry a loftier flight. At fifteen years of age he translated the Greek hymns of Synesius, though nothing has remained of them but the bare fact as mentioned in his 'Biographia Literaria.' Doubtless many a youthful verse has been lost; but even his choice of subject is characteristic. It is astonishing what conceptions of Christian and Plotinic creeds this good bishop (Porphyry) of the fourth century blends together. When Jehovah descends to earth, not only angels and saints rejoice, but also Hesperus, Cynthia, Titan, and countless spirits of the air. Pious prayers were intermingled with half-pantheistic yearnings to God, to the River God, and to the Primordial Light. What a jumble there must have been in the head of this beauty-distracted young translator! The next year (1788) he gave forth a poem more true to himself—the earliest which he granted for publication in Pickering's collective edition—"Time, Real and Imaginary—an Allegory":

"On the wide level of a mountain's head,  
I know not where, but 'twas some faery place,  
Their pinions, ostrich-like, for sails outspread,  
Two lovely children ran an endless race;  
    A sister and a brother  
    That far outstripped the other.  
Yet ever runs she with reverted face,  
And looks and listens for the boy behind:  
    For he, alas! is blind!  
O'er rough and smooth with even step he passed  
And knows not whether he be first or last!"

The idea of separating the two sides and yet conceiving them as brother and sister—pointing ominously forward to the “object, and subject” of his later days—showed a precocious power of abstraction. That Reality is blind, and therefore unconscious of the road it travels, and always outstripped by the Imagination, is an allegory in close relation with platonic principles. It may be read also as a prophecy of his own future. But with philosophy alone Coleridge was never satisfied. He wanted living forms. He conceived the person of Reality as a boy like himself, and that of Imagination as a girl like his sister, and set them both racing at the top of a hill, as he and she had doubtless often done at Ottery. He revelled in metaphysical generalities, but only for the purpose of embodying them individually. The rich imagery and the demonology of the neo-platonists were powerful magnets to him.

Mr. Boyer did not fail to strongly disapprove the overweening fancy of his pupil. His usual expression for him was, “The sensitive fool!” Not that he objected to his writing poetry, only (rather paradoxically) he wanted it to be of a reasonable kind! He tried to drill him into English odes and satires; set him subjects to treat, and even entered the results, if they pleased him, into a book of his own; and Coleridge, with his protean powers, gave him many a contribution. He composed a hymn for the children of Christ’s Hospital (1789), which brimmed over with gratitude, and which took the form of the same pretended Pindaric measure, and of the same superfluity

of personifications and metaphors, which had been adopted in youthful hymns by other pupils of Boyer's; namely, by Middleton and Leigh Hunt. In short and comic mock-heroics he ridiculed the amorous overflowings of the day; one of which, "Julia, or the Lap-dog," was honoured with a place in Boyer's collection. The lover clothes his wooing in the daintiest terms, and all goes well, till, in his ardour, he throws himself on his knees, and at the same time upon the lady's squealing pet. The machinery of sylphs here interwoven recalls the "Rape of the Lock." But such attempts left his heart cold; they showed him the unsatisfying side of the pseudo-classic style; they disgusted him with the falseness of the *obligato* keynote; and if he did not break out into active opposition, he fell into a strain of elegiac resignation. Leigh Hunt, who entered the school after he quitted it, but soon enough for the traditions he left, described him, as late as about 1799, as "the plaintive Coleridge."

Against the tyranny of Boyer his growing school-fellows gradually gave him support. Foremost was Thomas Middleton, a gentleman even in this orphan asylum, and later, Bishop of Calcutta (born 1769); a mild and unassuming friend, who stood by him with almost paternal protection until his departure for the university in 1788. Gradually the younger Grecians took his part; Robert Allen, for one—who left in 1792—a merry boy, with a hearty laugh, and so good-looking that a woman in the street, whose basket he upset,

turned her curses into blessings as soon as she saw his face; then Charles Valentine and Samuel Le Grice, respectively, till 1792 and 1794—two brothers full of roguery; subsequently often in trouble at the university for misbehaviour; then the open-hearted Frederick Franklin, till 1793, who later became a master in the school itself; then Samuel Flavell, till 1795—a noble-hearted lad, true, courageous and tender; a cheerful singer of tolerable verses, who little augured of his early death on the bloody field of Salamanca. And finally there was Charles Lamb, who drew close to him, entering the school soon after Coleridge (October 9, 1782) and leaving it also soon after he left it (November 23, 1789); a dull, sickly-looking London child, three years younger than Samuel, but with striking wit and sunny temper, with slow-ripening, though finally astonishing powers, in whom no one as yet suspected the future author of the 'Essays of Elia.' In this circle Coleridge found attentive listeners to his platonic and poetic effusions. On them he first practised that power of conversation, or rather of monologue, to which his life long he owed his most signal triumphs. Amazed, the boys listened to their young comrade, whose poor clothing contrasted so strangely with his high-soaring ideas. Often also he entered into hot discussions, especially with the elder Le Grice, whose thoughts were more true to the age, and his speech less pathetic; so that the two used to be compared to Ben Jonson *versus* Shakespeare, and to a Spanish galleon *versus* an English yawl. But however various the



opinions among them, the thirst for freedom was common to all. Favell, on one occasion, when Boyer threatened to cane him, turned upon the tyrant with bold front and open defiance, and compelled him to give way. When, therefore, the French Revolution broke out, and the Bastille was taken by the people, on the 14th July, 1789, its fall awoke a hollow echo even within the thick walls of Christ's Hospital. The "Grecians" sympathised with the Republic, and even sensible Middleton, and easy Charles Le Grice—as their early writings prove—vowed to uphold the Rights of Men. And oh! how readily must the sanguine boy-poet have caught fire! His inward emotions broke through all restraint; his poetry soared aloft in unrestrained freedom; and war was declared against the reign of the Rococo, whether in politics, religion or art.

The ode on the "Destruction of the Bastille" was the immediate expression of the mighty tidings. The poets of the Germanic and Latin races raised one chorus of exultation. The Whigs, represented by Charles Fox, welcomed the Revolution as the greatest and sublimest event in the history of the world. Even Pitt and the Tory party looked not unfavourably on it. Jacobin societies were formed in London and in the country. The yearning and inexperienced orphan boy shared, as a matter of course, in the most extravagant expectations of the time. Like the young Schiller at the school at Stuttgart, he raised a hearty "*in tyrannos*"; saw in imagination the advent of "Glad Liberty"; saw justice done

to all victims of despotism ; saw the peasant secure, and  
the orator fearless,

“ Till every land, from Pole to Pole,<sup>1</sup>  
Shall boast one independent soul.”

A large portion of the nation shared deeply in these precocious cosmopolitan dreams, and owned to no more patriotic wish than that “favoured Britain should be first ever of the first, and freest of the free,” the wording of the ode being as unique as its tendency. The measure agrees, with slight changes, with the opening of Gray’s “Progress of Poetry.” As there, also, the stormy advent of Progress is first described; then the hushed terror of the oppressed; and lastly, the joy that follows in the train of Freedom. Even the appeal at the end to Albion, as her chief refuge, is already prefigured. Of similar origin is the stirring rhetoric, the multiplied questions and exclamations, the catching at exuberant images, and the prophetic tone. Coleridge thus adopted the language of Gray, who himself had adopted that of Milton’s “Allegro”—the same two masters to whom he had attached himself in his landscape imagery. All that was really original in him was the fact that he was not inspired, like Gray and the other Pindaric poets of the eighteenth century, by any mere general abstraction, as in the “Ode to Inoculation,” but by an actual event of his time; though only a beginner, he was already individual.

Another of his school-day poems, “The Raven,” refers also to the outbreak of the Revolution. With a delicious

sense of revenge the bird sees the wreck of the ship which a tyrant had fashioned from the tree on which its nest was built. The metre is doggerel, and the diction that of a ballad-singer; the repetition of a set formula, "high and low, over hill and over dale," so frequent in old ballads, being doubtless borrowed from them. In short, this first poetic narrative by Coleridge has already a republican aim and a popular tone.

And coeval with the political rebellion in his mind occurred the religious one. The hymns already referred to cannot be quoted as evidences of his religious belief. In this mere school exercise we only see the general idea of an Almighty Being who sits on a splendid throne and looks compassionately down on poor orphans. What he subsequently (at Mr. Gillman's) declared to have been the convictions he then entertained are very different. The neo-platonic readings had disturbed his simple childlike faith. They had taught him to conceive the Godhead under the form, as such, of the Beautiful and the Good, and these again, in optimistic fashion, as ever present. To obtain such intuition, according to Taylor's Plotinus, "one must renounce and forget not only the domain of earth and sea, but also the kingdom of Heaven." Thus Coleridge had arrived at a pantheistic view of the world, and was no longer able, as he himself said, to identify the philosophic image of an infinite Being with that of the Christian's personal God. To this he now added a bit of medical materialism. His brother Luke, who, being brought up as a surgeon, attended the

London Hospital, once took Samuel with him. What the young Grecian there saw, inspired him with such interest, that, for long, every Saturday he got leave to visit the operation-room. His whole desire was to become a surgeon, and accordingly he incessantly read what books he could lay hands on, whether in English, Latin or Greek, on medical subjects. The inspired origin and absolute trustworthiness of the Bible, soon became more than doubtful in his eyes. He lost himself in Cato's ideas of fate, free will and natural necessity, and inclined to the creed of the Necessitarians. The study of Voltaire's 'Philosophical Dictionary' completed his perversion, and the beardless school-boy was as eager to declare himself an unbeliever, as the silver-haired old man, later, a submissive member of the Established Church. As soon as Boyer heard of his professed scepticism, he made short work—called him into his room, and did his best to cane the mischief out of him. In the 'Biographia Literaria' Coleridge mentions this as the only just punishment he had ever received at his hands; but for the present the orthodoxy of his master only helped to confirm his error. The "Monody on the Death of Chatterton" (first edition 1789, or 1790), which he composed as a school task, though hardly in the complete form in which it appears in Pickering's edition, is a proof of this. Here he boldly glorified the unhappy young Bristol poet, whom a morbid imagination, acting upon a mystifying habit of mind drove, in 1770, to the perpetration of suicide.

And here again, what is most his own does not lie in the form. Generally speaking, Gray's bard was his model here. In details, Milton's "Lycidas" evidently guided young Coleridge; the image, especially, of the flower, nobly destroyed by the worm within and the frost without, is borrowed from this source.

What is most Coleridgean is the sympathetic indignation with which he denounces his own sufferings in the fate of his unhappy contemporary :

"The keen insult from the unfeeling heart,  
The dread dependence on the low-born mind."

He further justifies him for not being withheld from draining the poisoned cup, even by the thought of his "native cot," of his weeping mother and lamenting sisters—motives of the greatest intensity with Coleridge himself. Finally, in the last part, he sees the happy spirit of the self-murderer standing among the angelic throng. How Boyer would have raged had he seen that passage and the next lines :

"Grant me, like thee, the lyre to sound,  
Like thee with fire divine to glow ;—  
But ah! when rage the waves of woe,  
Grant me with firmer breast to meet their hate,  
And soar beyond the storm with upright eye elate."

The moral of the ode is rather Platonic than Christian, though garnished with Seraphs and heavenly accessories. Coleridge had become a freethinker, not in the merely negative sense of the word, but from a positive excess of fancy. A sceptic like Voltaire

might pull down an old religion, but he could erect another in its place. Coleridge adopted rather a mystical tendency, inherited from his father, the chief grounds for which he had gathered from Plotinus and Synesius. Even in the department of poetry the Revolution opened channels of thought to him which Boyer would have called heretical. He began to rave about Bowles—a fancy just as comical in its way as Titania's love for Bottom. In truth, Bowles, now almost forgotten, was never a great poet; but in the development of the English landscape school he represented a tendency—consistent, though partial—quite in accordance with the spirit of the age. Although following ostensibly the steps of Milton, they conducted him in reality only to the homeliest sentimentality, in strong contrast to the marble pomp and coldness of the classic school. A glance at the history of that style from Milton downwards will materially help the comprehension of Coleridge's poetic nature.

In the "Allegro" and "Penseroso" Milton has left a model for the poem of subjective description. With the finest art he understands how to tone down every colour and emotion, with, as it were, their complementary colours. In the heat of noon he wanders along the splashing brook in the cool "brown shade" of pine or oak. In the still dark night he seeks the lights of the firmament, and the sounds of men; dwells on every sensuous charm of "twilight, with something like prophetic strain;" till through the magical chiaroscuro Fancy

“conjures up the invisible Genius of the Wood.” These characteristics—scene for scene, feature for feature—were taken up, like typical scenery, by the landscape-poets of the next generation. We give a few examples of the description of Noon. Dyer, for instance, in his “Country Walk,” has oaks, stream, “concert of birds,” and “hovering dreams.” He turns, it is true, Milton’s bees into birds; without, however, remembering that birds do not exactly sing at noontide. Then Mallet, in his “Fragment,” repeats the oaks, stream, visions, bees, and “shadows brown.” Again, Akenside brings in oaks, foliage (bower), stream, and bees. Gray, again, in his “Ode on the Spring”—originally called “Noontide”—oaks, water, hum of insects, and “shadows brown”; while Collins’ “Ode on the Poetical Character” is a direct allusion to Milton’s original. Granting that the similarity of the subject entailed, involuntarily, a certain amount of the same accessories, yet there is more imitation of Milton than original observation in these reproductions. The rising middle class, however, showed its influence, and in two ways. On the one hand, what may be termed the aristocratic character of the scenery is simplified. Thus, in the picture of Evening, Akenside introduces the cuckoo as well as the nightingale, while Gray brings in “the drowsy owl.” The boldly-peopled allegories also sink into abstract and disembodied personifications. On the other hand, the descriptive landscape-poets—especially Thomson—overleap their imaginative materials altogether, and replace them by

a dull reality. Instead of classical allusions, we have general reflections. The light, changeful rhythm also becomes monotonous, and stiffens into mechanical couplets. At the same time a democratic element insinuates itself. The "high lonely tower" of the "Penseroso" (Evening) crumbles down with Dyer and Collins into a melancholy ruin, with Mallet to a grave, and with Gray (though who should regret it!) into an entire churchyard. Further, Mallet is stirred with compassion for the suffering poor—Akenside for unhappy lovers—Shenstone for the negro slave—and Gray, for all the sum of human ills which threaten, more or less, every school-boy. All this became more exaggerated at the Werther period. Then ensued a succession of lachrymose sonneteers; Mrs. Charlotte Smith, for instance, who treated subjects from Milton, Gray, Collins, Pope, and Goethe; while five years later the young and pious Bowles, in a journey undertaken for his health, poured out the misery of his soul at an unsuccessful love affair. With him melancholy is the ruling passion; melancholy, morning and evening; melancholy, day and night; and melancholy at every beautiful landscape that meets his eye. Every figure under his hand becomes pale and cloudy; the attributes under which the allegories of hope, sympathy, and time, etc., had been personified, have almost disappeared. The style melts down into a slip-slop sentimentality, unless propped up by the traditional scaffolding of the sonnet. And even in this case the Miltonian concentration of the sense is



set aside, his strict Italian metre neglected, and the last verse, sometimes musically, drawn out an extra foot. At the same time, the sense of sympathy is directed to the poet's own poor heart, and the luxury of self-pity rises to the point of hysteria. Milton had dwelt on the mood engendered by

“ . . . The far-off Curfew sound  
Over some wide-watered shore,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar.”  
(“Penseroso,” line 75.)

Gray uses the sound as a “memento mori.” Bowles is “pierced to the heart” by it. Art is replaced by endless emotion.

As the English romantic poets went forth both to combat the classic school with its super-sense and pride of strict rules, and to endow the poetry of the fairy tale with new life, their first halt was under the shadow of Bowles. Compared with such a poet of the intellect as Pope, who had maintained that, with a clear head and dexterous style, nothing was too prosaic to be converted into poetry, such an elegist as Bowles, who aimed at all effect through the heart, was a most refreshing contrast. His sonnets came into Wordsworth's hand (1793) just as he was leaving London with some friends for a morning's excursion; he seated himself in a recess on Westminster Bridge, and was not to be moved from his place till he had finished the little book. Southey, again, owned in 1832 that for forty years he had taken the sweet and artless style of Bowles for a model. But the

mind most captivated by him, because most inclined to lyrical composition, was Coleridge's. The publication which first appeared in 1789, with a second edition in the same year, with twenty additional sonnets, was the one first known to him. He received a copy forthwith from his friend Middleton, and, during the year and half he still spent in Christ's Hospital, he copied it out above forty times, by way of the worthiest farewell present he could leave with his school-fellows ; thus proving the direction of their literary interest and taste. With customary exaggeration, he used to maintain in later days that no book had given him more delight and edification—the Bible itself, at most, excepted. These gentle influences had meanwhile awakened fancy, love, and sympathy in him, converting him from a speculating philosopher, and dedicating him as a true poet.

Poets, according to Shelley, are like chameleons—they take the colour of the plants on which they feed. Of course Coleridge now broke into the manner of Bowles, but by no means so slavishly as his panegyric, given above, would have led us to expect. He had, it is true, more cause for elegiac sentiment ; for he had to bear all the miseries of the school, whilst Bowles was comfortably travelling. In 1790 he lost his only and dearly loved sister by death, while Bowles only got rid of an unworthy sweetheart. And in the end, through a chance circumstance, Coleridge had no less to endure the "gracious gifts of Aphrodite." On the 11th June, 1788, a boy eight years of age, by name John Evans, son of a saddler at

Machintesh, in Montgomeryshire, entered the school, where in 1794 he learnt a trade and gained in Coleridge, the highly-placed Grecian, a friendly protector. In return the boy introduced his mother and three sisters to him. Mrs. Evans was a kind-hearted widow, and showed her gratitude to the friend of her son by certain substantial proofs, long denied to him; and, in short, taught him what it was to have a mother. The heart of the poor sixteen-year-old lad expanded, and with a precocity by no means rare in the poet-nature, he fell seriously in love with the eldest little daughter. Mary was a pretty girl, daintily dressed, and of agreeable manners, who had just entered the business of dress-making. This attachment converted London during the last two years of his school-life into a paradise. How proud he was when Mary came to ask for him, and his school-fellows ran to summon him—"Your friends are here—she's really a lady!" What bliss when, accompanied by his handsome friend Allen, he fetched her from her work, and accompanied her home! Or, again, when on some summer morning he paid her a visit at her "house of business," "with the gatherings from the flower-gardens within a circuit of six miles," the bouquet itself wrapped in a love-sonnet! Under such conditions it was only natural that verse upon verse poured forth, in comparison with which the Muse of his extolled model takes but a secondary place.

The most evident sign of independence appears in the sonnet called "Pain." Bowles had been in Ostend,

where the fragrant morning breeze had excited in him "a trembling sense of wan disease." Coleridge opens a similar poem with the same nervous sensation, and even partly with the same words. But as it continues he takes an independent strain, and relates how he had laid on a bed of sickness, sleepless and in pain, while his school-fellows played and laughed around him; and thus leads us to a positive situation, while Bowles only spends himself in vague sighs for a vanished youth.

Still more freely constructed, and even with a mixture of the trochaic measure, is his poem "To the Muse" (1789), a piece in fourteen lines, in which he seeks the same pensive and emotional effect which was Bowles' constant aim, though avoiding any direct similarity. Nor did he follow Bowles exclusively. In this very apostrophe "To the Muse" he looks down, like Gray in his "Elegy," to a country churchyard with a placid smile on the noisy throng doing homage to Fashion's various follies. In his sonnet "To the Autumnal Moon" the influence of Milton takes the lead; the landscape is not so tame and insipid as with Bowles, who would merely have given the moon shining, or hiding, while Coleridge shows the wandering crescent now "gliding through a fleecy cloud" ("Penseroso," line 72) and now "behind the gathered blackness lost" ("Penseroso," line 70). Their identifying attributes are also restored to certain personifications. Night is the "mother of wildly-working visions" ("Comus," line 128), and Despair is "dragon-winged" ("Penseroso," line 69). The poet has already

turned back from the eighteenth to the seventeenth century—from the tame simplicity of the Humanists to the bolder beauty of the Renaissance. Finally, the two “Sonnets to his Sister” would have been entirely original, but for a few mythological commonplaces towards the end and a sickly contempt for life quite in the style of Bowles.

Thus the foundations of his mind, laid, not according to his own inclinations, but by the will of those who were set over him, were already firmly defined when he left the school, September 7th, 1790. The future poet was already stirred within him. He was acquainted with the prose of earthly cares, but they wring from him rather a proud contempt than an anxious anticipation. He was fitted out with profound scholarship, though his modes of thought are not scholarly. On the contrary, he is far more devoted to a philosophy which nourishes him with the imaginative manna of intuition. Still, within the sphere of poetry his foot is already firmly set on the road which led to his laurels. He is first and foremost a landscape elegist; he cultivates also a lofty lyrical style, and tries his hand in the epic direction. He clings also, schoolboy-like, to his models, but from the first he keeps one hand free, and grasps unchecked at the actual occurrences of life. The time has now come when he has to enter the wide world, and as the doors of Christ’s Hospital open to set him free, he realises for the first time the stupendous step before him. In a sonnet *à la* Bowles he takes a tender leave of the familiar cloisters, or rather

of the hours of innocence and poetry which he had there dreamed away. In a poem of similar elegiac mood, called "Absence"—though according to him "a farewell ode,"—he describes with reverential awe his entrance into the University, while the bustle of London left behind already assumes a melancholy transfiguration in his mind :

"Where, graced with many a classic spoil,  
Cam rolls his reverend stream along,  
I haste to urge the learned toil,  
That sternly chides my love-lorn song.  
Ah me ! too mindful of the days  
Illumined by Passion's orient rays,  
When Peace, and Cheerfulness, and Health  
Enriched me with the best of wealth."

## CHAPTER II.

## AT THE UNIVERSITY. (1791-94.)

“Sweet flower of hope! free Nature’s genial child!  
That didst so fair disclose thy early bloom,  
Filling the wide air with a rich perfume!”

—*Monody on Chatterton.*

Cambridge—Happy Time—Obtains Brown’s Gold Medal—His Peculiarities—Torrents of Talk—Revolutionary Opinions—Berkeley—Hartley—Priestley—Friend—The French Terror—Godwin—Enlistment—Discharge—Letter to Brother—Return to Cambridge—Southey—Plan of Pantisocracy—Bristol—Lectures—The Fricker Family—The Fall of Robespierre—Return to Cambridge—Kind Treatment there—Leaves Cambridge—Aversion to Pitt—Studies Milton—“Religious Musings.”

IT was on the 5th of February, 1791, that Coleridge’s name was first entered at Cambridge; his first term dating from the 13th of January. Wordsworth, as fresh-made B.A., was just leaving. The two poets were destined to continue for many a year a separate course, before they met at last in friendship.

He had spent the four months which had elapsed after leaving Christ’s Hospital with his family at Ottery, where his brother George, meanwhile, occupied the position formerly held by their father. For the first time for many a year he found himself once more in the family circle, and regaled himself with the sight of his

native landscape. He thus renewed the impressions of his childhood, enjoying them, for his sister was gone, more solitarily, but more thoughtfully. The poetic ideas that crowded upon him took the same forms as before, though somewhat freer and more cheerful. Coming suddenly upon a distant landscape, he invokes, in soft, Bowles-like strain, a future in which wisdom might unfold to him scenes of similar beauty. The sonnet concludes with a Plotinic glance beyond :

“My eye shall dart through infinite expanse,  
And thought suspended lie in rapture’s blissful trance.”

He ridicules again the bombastic odes of the Classicists. Parodying the commencement of “*Il Penseroso*”—“Hence! vain deluding joys”—with the slightly altered line, “Hence! soul-dissolving Harmony,” he thus ironically extols the discord of birds, children, and church-bells all sounding together in his village. He also saucily compares the muddy road to Plimtree with the awful roads of Hell in “*Paradise Lost*.” It was a time in which he rested and took breath.

On his reaching Cambridge he entered a fresh period of struggle, for the career laid out before him was planned in a theological direction. The stipendiaries of Christ’s Hospital were sent to the university, if not with the avowed intention yet with the moral obligation of entering the Church. Coleridge’s position as pensioner of Jesus College had been chosen by the authorities with particular reference to the great reputation for the study



of Divinity enjoyed ever since Cranmer's time by that college, which stood under the direct protection of the Bishop of Ely. It was recorded on the original document that "if he were preferred to that college his prospects in the Church would be favourable." This last dictation, however, on the part of his old master, Boyer, was met by Coleridge with quiet resistance. He intended to choose his own course of life, and the academic freedom which prevailed in Cambridge, and more especially in Jesus College, in the eighteenth century, favoured this design.

Every Cantab at that time could study how and what he pleased. Those who went in for the hardest study were, it is true, examined both in classics and mathematics. But the standard of requirement was very lenient; a few Latin and Greek authors, the rudiments of mathematics from Euclid, the chief works of Locke and Paley, and success was certain. The young men had therefore little occasion for exertion till towards the end of their stay, reading meanwhile in a leisurely way, and devoting themselves to bodily exercises and various forms of killing time. The lectures of the few Professors were neglected, while the numerous Fellows in Jesus College alone—sixteen in number—the supposed teachers of the usually forty students, led a life hardly less inanimate than that of the monks they had replaced. Museums and libraries were in scandalous disorder, locked up and covered with dust. The laxity in study was glossed over with much

church attendance, strictly exacted from the undergraduates.

How Coleridge must have enjoyed the release from school tyranny! The blue coat now exchanged for the honoured black gown, the caning for respect and courtesy. The dingy courts and narrow alleys of the city replaced by smooth meadows and well-kept walks by the gently murmuring Cam. The college itself—a stately Gothic building, luxuriantly covered with ivy, situated at the east end of the town—was originally a convent. James I. is reported to have said that if he lived in Cambridge, he would like to preach in King's College, dine at Trinity, and study and sleep at Jesus College. No Boyer was over him here, but a courteous man of the world, the Rev. Dr. Pearce, whose sermons, published by his son, breathe the gentlest spirit of Christianity; at the same time he was a patron of art, the Presentation in the Temple, by a Bolognese master, in the chapel of the college, having been his gift. A story is told which illustrates the gentle way in which he once took Coleridge to task, on meeting him in the street, arm in arm between two gentleman commoners, in a ragged old gown. "Mr. Coleridge! Mr. Coleridge! when will you get rid of that shameful gown?" "Why, Sir, I think I've got rid of the greater part of it already." Under these circumstances a happy student-time with easy work lay before him, and according as he turned it to profit, a bright future also.

In truth he made some hearty efforts. But few

months after his entrance, he obtained the Brown gold medal—worth five guineas—for the best Greek ode in the style of Sappho. The performance has in itself no particular merit. The subject turned upon negro-slavery, at that time still tolerated by the English Government, though indignantly condemned by all enlightened thinkers. The leading idea that the poor blacks welcomed Death as a deliverer is repeated from the “*Monody on Chatterton.*” But the Greek, though not faultless, is decidedly well turned. The tradition is, that his friends shut him up with pen, ink and paper, in order to finish the ode. Nor is there any doubt that his studious friend, Middleton, whom he found established close by in Trinity, contributed much to make him persevere. How many in Cambridge at that time had need of such a friend! At all events, his success gave him intense gratification, and spurred him on to fresh efforts. At the commencement of the autumn term he went through an examination, which resulted in his admission to the class of “sizar” on the 26th November, 1791; so that with the £40 allowance from Christ’s Hospital, he managed to get along. He now took up the study of mathematics, and not merely in joke, as would appear from the doggerel he wrote his brother George in March 1791, but in all seriousness—always recommending Simpson’s Euclid to every new-comer. He read also a number of prize odes of the last ten years, and all the Latin poets of the last century, and even wished to draw up a volume of

imitations; but only got as far as a paraphrase of Casimir's elegy "ad Lyram;" for one idea always stood in the way of another. In 1793 he tried again for the Brown prize, taking "The Praise of Astronomy" for his subject, in a Miltonian strain, preserved in Southey's version, but found himself disappointed, probably with good reason. At the same time he also aspired, and in vain, to obtain the scholarship founded by Lord Craven for the best productions in classical Latin, but, succeeding in an examination, he obtained one of the pensions attached to Jesus College for clergy orphan sons, amounting to £40 a year. These facts suffice to prove that he was no idler.

Still, he had become too headstrong and ambitious to confine himself within the limits of any regular profession. The lesson of earning his bread had no attraction for him. He attached himself to no teacher, and, in spite of his exaggerated forms of acknowledgment, was grateful to no one. He professed the universality of the genuine poet's nature, which feels the call to reflect the whole of existence, with its heights and depths, in his single microcosm. Varied forms of life, with strange desultory reading, were his favourite occupations. The usual aspect he presented to his friends was seated in his room on the ground-floor of the large court—on the right of the staircase opposite the great entrance—green lawns, old grey walls, and waving tree-tops seen from his windows, and above, in the distance, some of the city towers; before him

some philosophic treatise, or a volume of poems, or the last party pamphlet of the day, or some foreign travels—such as Bruce's 'Travels in Central Africa.' Others might be exercising their arms and legs, or gratifying their appetites; his pleasure consisted in intellectual "will of the wisping."

But what he thus mentally imbibed, he was at all times ready to give forth again in literal torrents of talk. For this exercise the social habits which to this day prevail in Cambridge, gave him rich opportunity. His room was a rendezvous for those who loved conversation. What delightful evenings round his tea-table! His friend Valentine Le Grice, who had entered Trinity in 1792, gave in his own old age an enthusiastic account of these meetings. With his wonderful memory, Coleridge often recited verbatim what he had read in the morning. These recollections were mixed with visions full of enthusiasm and originality. With child-like confidence he would forecast the most splendid plans for the improvement of the world, the winged words pouring in melodious accents from the voluptuous lips. The oration brimmed over with logical absurdities, which however vanished beneath the hurricane of dazzling images. The orator had a wide mouth, not over good teeth, a small, inexpressive nose, a negligent mode of dress; but all that was forgotten in the transporting, almost overpowering warmth of his convictions. And he was proud of his power. His large grey eye sparkled with "noble madness"; on the pale

lofty forehead, with its overhanging locks of black hair divided down the centre, there seemed to hover the promise of genius. It was at such moments that some impudent fellow-student would cut off one piece of his gown after another, without his remarking it. But generally his audience were dissolved in admiring rapture; and their approbation, heartier and more discriminating than that of his school-fellows at Christ's Hospital, encouraged him in his dreams.

The germs of neo-platonic philosophy, of revolutionary opinions, and of romantic composition which had struck root in the orphan school now shot freely upwards, under the happier auspices of his present life.

At this time Taylor was actively engaged in publishing one translation after another in single covers from Plotinus 'On the Beautiful.' The "Phædrus" appeared in 1792; four more dialogues from Plato and Sallust in 1793; and five books from Plotinus in 1794. These are all publications claiming not only an historical and philological interest, but almost the character of genuine revelations. Coleridge probably read them, for the philosophical ideas which he laid down, towards the end of his university time, in his "Religious Musings," agree with them point for point. If he did not know them, they present a wonderful coincidence with his own development. His interest in Hellenic mysticism was evidently not the passing whim of an eccentric student, but took its rise from a generally felt want of the time. Locke had disclaimed the exist-

ence of all innate ideas. According to him, we only perceive through the medium of the senses, or through the observation of the mind, and therefore through the agency of experience inward and outward. Hence had arisen a form of scepticism repugnant to the English mind. The Scotch school of metaphysicians, represented by Reid and Dugald Stewart—Johnson's contemporaries—had already protested in the name of common-sense against this system, and asserted the leading principles of belief to be intuitive; and Taylor and Coleridge, in their turn, protested in the name of imagination and feeling. They insisted on grand ideas as incentives to grand deeds—such as had just led to the French Revolution—careless how far they exchanged simple, if unsatisfying, truth for mere hypothesis. They philosophised with passionate earnestness, but with uncritical methods, worthy rather of pedagogues, theologians and poets, than of philosophers. They allied themselves rather with an erotic philosophy, such as Plato propounds in the "Phædrus." "God's most holy name is Love," is the text in Coleridge's "Religious Musings," "diffused thro' all, and making all one whole." The absorption in this idea gives us peace, elevation and "noontide majesty." "Away then with prayer in the Christian sense of a direct means of help; it is the worst superstition to desire aught but Him." They believed therefore, with Sallust, that all ancient myths symbolised more or less the truth. Hence the attempt to explain platonically in the "Religious Musings" the Biblical prophecies of

the Resurrection and coming again of Christ. The vast family of Love returns purified to its ancient source. Hence, also, they accepted in the widest extent Plotinus' endeavour to fuse the Christian and Platonic dogmas together. It would be impossible to follow Coleridge in the tortuous labyrinth of thought and reasoning, and the sublimated rendering of the Christian scheme which he evolved. The sum of his doctrines was that the attributes of the Godhead are at the same time the abiding principles of all things. This doctrine seemed to him to counterbalance, or rather counteract, that tendency to rationalism which he recognised as the disease of the time, and which his friend Middleton thus pithily condemned: "The head scoffs, and the heart sighs." At the same time he threw a bold bridge over the chasm between Reason and Belief, Matter and Spirit, Nature and Duty. But the bridge hung in mid-air, supported only by axioms of feeling, and by optimistic illusions which the first blast of affliction was sure to blow away. Coleridge fought against narrowness, but fell into the opposite extreme.

In order to ratify and complete his views, our young philosopher diligently studied the later thinkers. Voltaire and Hume, according to Carlyle, did their worst and their best for him ('Life of Stirling'). Certainly no two other men could be named whom he more thoroughly and continuously hated and despised. Descartes and Leibnitz stirred him not; even Spinoza pleased him better. But no English philosopher fascinated him like Berkeley.



The pious Bishop of Cloyne—died 1753—had already arrayed the Platonic theories against the materialism of Locke. He had fitted also the ideas of the Hellenic philosophers to the more realistic taste of his compatriots by explaining them not only as the prototypes of Truth, Beauty, and Justice, but as the very things themselves; while even the Biblical representations of the Creation, and the Day of Judgment, were made to harmonise with the scheme.

But his greatest favourite among the modern metaphysicians was Hartley, “he of mortal tribe wisest,” as he calls him in the “Religious Musings.” His ‘Remarks on Man’ appeared in 1749. In 1790 Dr. Priestley published an abstract of them, and in 1791 Hartley’s son published a new edition of them, which enlisted Coleridge as its most earnest propagandist. How he managed to be equally enthusiastic for Hartley—who acknowledged no matter,—and for Berkeley—the ultra-materialist, who treated perception and memory as the purely physical results of nervous vibration and action,—is one of those enigmas with which Coleridge’s early life abounds. But to bring extremes into actual contact was the aim of the Romantic School. He who explains all physical things as mental phenomena, can reverse the process without really contradicting himself. Thus Coleridge settled the question to his own satisfaction. He was as yet no acute thinker, and never an unprejudiced one. In the same way his great authority Plotinus had perceived no real divergence between the schools of Plato and

Aristotle—between an intuitive idealism, and a scientific realism. In such contradictory complications Philosophy is sure to suffer in proportion as the Imagination may gain.

Nor were his religious opinions proof against these strange amalgams. Coleridge was driven to interpret symbolically many a point in his creed which the Church holds literally. The consequence was, that the Second Person of the Trinity no longer maintained His position as God, except as, in a pantheistic sense, every human creature is divine, but sunk into the sublimest bearer of a divine mission. Coleridge's neo-platonism led naturally to the Unitarian confession, and he only needed a guide and leader to join the Unitarian sect. Just at this crisis two men appeared on the stage ready to perform this office towards him. They were the daily talk of Cambridge, respected by all for their talents, and honoured by some as martyrs to their convictions.

The one was Dr. Priestley, the great chemist, known for his investigations into the action of the lungs upon the blood, and into that of the atmosphere upon plants; the discoverer also of the law by which vegetables secrete the oxygen which animals require. The study of Hartley had turned Priestley from a Calvinist into a Necessitarian, without disturbing his strict religiosity; but while he passed in England for a dangerous free-thinker, he astonished the French *savans*, on occasion of a visit to Paris, by his unshaken belief in Revelation; if that could be called such which discarded the cardinal

dogmas of Original Sin, Atonement, and the Divinity of Christ. Although residing far from the universities, he exerted himself particularly to influence the theological candidates in Oxford and Cambridge. "Use your reason," he wrote in a pamphlet (1787); "no one abandons reason till Reason has abandoned him." At the same time, he recommended a diligent study of the Scriptures, and even published a devotional manual, though containing prayers of the strangest rationalistic character; for example, one for a man just inoculated for small-pox. But this was exactly the medley which Coleridge liked. In his "Religious Musings" he extols the writer, as patriot, saint and sage, who sowed Religion in the same furrow with Reason and Science. Nor did Coleridge stand in this respect alone in Cambridge. His friend Middleton—the future Bishop—wrote a favourable review of Priestley's work in the *British Critic*; while Valentine Le Grice, in a speech on the anniversary of the Founder's day (18th December, 1794) pronounced Priestley and Hartley to be the first philosophers of the age.

With Priestley himself, Coleridge, to his great regret, had no means of communication, except through the medium of his books. But there was another Unitarian who lived in Cambridge, and was even a Fellow of Jesus College, and who provided that personal instruction indispensable for conversion. William Frend was a man who exercised by his knowledge and strong convictions an influence over the young students which soon caused the authorities alarm. At one time a

distinguished minister of the Established Church, he had become in 1788 an adherent of Priestley, actively propagating his doctrines, partly by personal influence, and partly by a powerful pamphlet, "Peace and Union." The Established Church and its privileges was in his eyes the great disturber of the peace; the subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles—then the indispensable condition for admission to the universities, to public offices, and even to the House of Commons—was the object of his bitterest polemic.

It was no joke then to confess the creed of these men. Those who denied the divinity of Christ were liable to prosecution for blasphemy. The opponents of Priestley were so violent as to stir up a riot against him in 1791, in which his house was attacked, his books and instruments burnt, and himself compelled to leave the country for America. Frennd was not much better treated. No sooner had he declared himself a Unitarian than he was deprived of his professorship, and on the appearance of his pamphlet, cited to appear before the Vice-Chancellor. The trial lasted for months. He defended himself in a powerful speech, five hours in length, in which he declared that he would sooner cut off his hand than sign the required recantation; and was finally condemned to the loss of all academic dignities and emoluments, retaining only his learning and his honour. He had to write school-books and to take a situation in an insurance office. With his able pen, however, he continued to keep himself before the eyes

of the young students as an heroic example. For Coleridge such a martyrdom had no terror—only charm. He knew that all his prospects in life were jeopardised, but had not Plotinus taught him to despise all material interests? He did not hesitate therefore in his "Religious Musings" to extol the "pitying calm" with which Priestley had abandoned his house to the blind fury of the multitude. He followed Frennd's trial also with the most lively sympathy, read all the works that streamed from the press, was present at the close of the trial, and declared his adherence to the accused by such violent clapping that he was within a hair of being included in the same accusation.

But it would be unjust to him to think that he gave his mind exclusively to speculation. The current politics of the day engrossed him no less than philosophical and poetic fables. The Romantic School provided him not only with literary occupation, but presented a natural standard of life to which he longed to return. Pictures of the earthly paradise that would ensue on a complete dissolution of society, as then constituted, floated before the vision of the young student. The world was to grow young again. All his hopes meanwhile were fastened on the progress of the Revolution on the other side of the Channel, and on the tidings thence received were his plans and resolutions formed.

The dominating event of the time was the transformation of the French outburst of freedom into the tyranny of a republican Terror. Paris knew no bounds, but

steered her way through blood and crime. Public opinion in England changed accordingly. The party of progress believed as long as they possibly could in the high-sounding watchwords of universal humanity, but every fresh announcement of horror decimated their ranks. Even Burke, who had defended American Independence against his own king, was alarmed at the proceedings of the "Assemblée Nationale" abolishing all distinction of ranks, and horrified at the march of the people to Versailles, and the invasion of the palace by the Poissardes. With passionate speeches in Parliament, splendid articles in periodicals, with pathetic rhetoric and far-seeing principles, he sought to influence the nation against the brutal advocates of Equality. As Marie Antoinette became the object of insult, he broke out into his well-known lament over the decline of chivalry, the approaching reign of the Sophists, Economists, and Algebraists, and over the eternal ruin of Europe's glory. The Tory party recognised their deadly enemies, and immediately after the execution of the king, Mr. Pitt proceeded to declare war (February 1793). People and government alike took a fever of consternation at the Jacobin party at home. The Habeas Corpus Act was suspended; a number of secret police sworn in; here and there some harmless hot-headed fool was accused of high treason, and some, as a matter of fact, condemned and transported. There was doubtful safety under the tree of Freedom.

The storm that passed over the country made itself

felt in the quiet seats of learning more than our books of history have divulged. The Cambridge periodicals of the day, and Frennd's speech in his own defence furnish interesting data. At first, when the destruction of the Bastille became known, the Vice-Chancellor himself had declared it to be "a subject of triumph and congratulation." By the year 1792, however, Senate and masters had entirely adopted the principles espoused by Pitt. A street riot on the 13th December, 1792, when a baker had his windows broken, and a grocer his house plundered, only led to conservative unions between all ranks. On the evening of the 25th January, 1793, soon after the decapitation of the king, the bell of St. Mary's church tolled as solemnly as if one of England's own great sons had been laid in the grave. At the same time the French emigrants were supported by the most liberal subscriptions. Prosecutions also were instituted against revolutionary expressions. Yet, notwithstanding, a portion of the University body, and that closest connected with Coleridge, sympathised openly with the Revolution. Frennd compared the fate of Louis XVI. with that of Charles I. and James II. "No Englishman need be alarmed at the execution of an individual at Paris." Valentine le Grice, who settled down later into a comfortable vicarage and married a rich widow, announced himself in his commemoration speech as an ardent believer in Rousseau's happiness of the whole world. Even the aristocratic Middleton belonged to the Republican party, and was obliged after his examination

in 1792 to leave the university without obtaining the wish of his heart—a fellowship at Jesus College. Later, as vicar of a parish, he published a highly democratic, almost anarchical weekly paper, and only cooled gradually down with the sobering intercourse of the real country people. As to our young Hotspur, he stood of course in the front ranks, and the further his principles could be proved to be removed from all interested motives, from all mere Jacobinism, and from all humanitarian cant, the more blindly did he adhere to what he thought the cause of a virtuous Revolution. He accordingly ranged himself on the side of the strangest of all the champions of Freedom, Equality and Brotherly Love, followed by Le Grice, but by no means by Frennd or Middleton—on the side of William Godwin.

The work on 'Political Justice' by this Don Quixote of the Revolution appeared in 1793, in a massive quarto volume, for the price of £1 16s., and thus escaped confiscation; for Mr. Pitt foresaw no danger of popularity from so expensive a work. "Repeal all laws" was the burden of his song. Throw off all social restraints—that of marriage not excepted—for man is good and spotless by nature, and prohibition alone renders vice attractive. That is the only and unfailing way to make every citizen happy, and the happiness of the citizen alone gives governments the right of existence. Godwin believed in no natural passions, being himself a monster of phlegma; and according to him, man had only to be a lay



figure of Reason to be right. To this "holy guidance" Coleridge committed himself. Like Godwin, he desired the abolition of all private property, because then thieves and robbers would no longer exist. He defined princes and lords as professional tyrants—the plague-boils of society. He declaimed against all support on the part of the State—even against a private payment of the clergy. He opposed the principles of "mine" and "thine" on moral grounds; he opposed the aristocracy from a sense of nobility, and the clergy from motives of religion. "Away with the superfluous harmful crutches of virtue." "Away with the petty motives of utilitarianism." Abolition of marriage (to do him justice) he opposed; otherwise he advocated a return to a simple state of nature. He revelled in the first Maytime of revolutionary enthusiasm.

One must realise the extent to which these unitarian and communistic opinions had estranged him from the system of the University, and destroyed his prospects in life, in order to comprehend a step now taken by Coleridge, which stands alone as the strangest adventure of his career. Towards the end of September he vanished from Cambridge, and enlisted as a soldier. It was an act of desperation for which various motives are assigned by various reporters—such as Gillman, Cottle, Bowles—no one probably knowing the whole truth, though each contributing a fragment. The story sounds like a romance, and was actually treated as one a few years later by a friend of the poet, from materials.

furnished by himself ('Edmund Oliver,' by Charles Lloyd, 1798). Love had by no means the least part in this extraordinary step. On leaving London—or rather Christ's Hospital—his Mary had

“Twined a laurel wreath around my brow,  
And met my kiss and half returned my vow.”

(“Lines on an Autumnal Evening”). When away her image had sunk still deeper into his heart, and on gaining the prize for the Greek ode, nothing delighted him so much as her sympathy. He corresponded also with one of her sisters. There were other young ladies, it is true, to whom he dedicated verses—in Cambridge, for instance, to the well-known actress Miss Brunton; in Plymouth, where he accompanied his brother George on a little excursion, to a certain Miss F. Nesbitt, of whom nothing further is known. But what he wrote on this lady is too stilted to show any real passion. Mary remained the queen of his heart, and she—he had now reason to know—preferred another. But what had he to offer her? He was poor—his present opinions stood in the way of a career—he was also oppressed with debts. In his unpractical way he had given an unlimited order to an upholsterer to do up his college rooms, and an exorbitant bill was the result, and pressure for the money. All these distresses together were too much for his head. He was probably in this despairing mood when he planned a poem “On the Miseries of Human Life.” At last he threw letters and bills, books and

gown to the dogs, and ran away, no one knew whither.

He did not go to his relations, where, from his want of common-sense, he had only reproaches to expect, but he went to London to try his fortune. By chance he prowled about the neighbourhood of that Abbey at Westminster where his bust now stands, seeking some means of maintenance, but finding only hunger and misery. Having spent the night in the street, and bestowed his last penny upon a professional beggar, he caught sight of a recruiting placard. It was a Government advertisement for light dragoons, for the war with the French Republic. The bounty-money offered was tempting—also the prospect of a new life, and that on horseback, and a blessed oblivion beyond the sea. His sympathies, it is true, were all with the people and the cause which the dragoons were enlisted to oppose; but his love of independence, and the last movements of common-sense were dismissed with the pretext that he had an old prejudice against soldiers and horses, and prejudices should be got rid of. He went to the bureau in a condition of semi-irresponsibility—like “Edmund Oliver” in the story above-named, who also wanders about Shoreditch, half-crazed by the infidelity of his lady-love. The corporal to whom he went—a kind old man—must have seen something amiss in his expression; he let him rest in his own room, gave him breakfast, lent him half-a-guinea, told him to take a walk, to go to the theatre, and did his best to turn him from his

project. But in vain ; Coleridge could be as obstinate as he could be rash. He shared the old man's bed that night, took the bounty-money next morning, and was sent as a common recruit to the Government Mews at Reading—now in sad reality a Necessitarian !

At first the poetic young dragoon accepted the situation with a sort of desperation. Being asked his name, he gave one beginning with the same initials, viz., Silas Tomkyn Comberbach, which he had seen on a shop-front. Like "Edmund Oliver," he received the congratulations of his comrades with a forced hilarity, all the time wishing in his heart that the regiment might soon be sent to some pestilential climate. When, at the first muster, the General asked him if he could run a Frenchman through—his bearing was evidently of no imposing kind—he answered with martial modesty, that rather than desert his post, he would let a Frenchman run him through. He joined in the laugh against his own bad riding, and worse curry-combing. But he wrote the soldiers' love-letters for them, told them marvels about a certain celebrated general, Alexander the Great, and amused himself with their naïve remarks. In the course of a month he got tired of the empty and coarse, and sometimes cruel, barrack life ; and as one day the order arrived to despatch a part of the regiment to the scene of war, he recognised with horror on what a precipice he had placed himself. He saw himself engaged for "systematic murder," for "blood-shedding *en gros*," and ate bread that had been

bought "with sighs and tears, with mutilated bodies and violent deaths" ('Edmund Oliver'). It was then he wrote on the stable wall, "Eheu! quam infortunii miserrimum est fuisse felicem." This fortunately caught the eye of Captain Nathaniel Ogle, a classically educated man, who from that moment became his protector and adviser. A Cambridge man also met him accidentally in the street in Reading, who spoke earnestly to him and offered him help. Crushed and contrite now, he writhed for liberty. How his release was effected is now for the first time made clear by the following letter, addressed by Coleridge to his brother, Captain James Coleridge, then at Tiverton. This letter is in the possession of the present Lord Coleridge, and finds its place here as a highly interesting and hitherto unknown contribution to the life.

"To a mind which vice has not utterly divested of sensibility, few occurrences can inflict a more acute pang than the receiving proofs of tenderness and love where only resentment and reproach were expected and deserved. The gentle voice of conscience which had incessantly murmured within the soul then raises its tone, and speaks with the tongue of thunder. My conduct towards you, and towards my other brothers has displayed a strange combination of madness, ingratitude and dishonesty. But you forgive me. May my Maker forgive me! May the time arrive when I shall have forgiven myself!

"With regard to my emancipation, every enquiry I

have made, every piece of intelligence I could collect, alike tend to assure me that it may be done by *interest*, but not by negotiation, without an expense which I should tremble to write. Forty guineas were offered for a discharge the day after a young man was sworn in, and were refused. His friends made interest, and his discharge came down from the War Office. If, however, negotiation *must* be first attempted, it will be expedient to write to our Colonel—his name is Gwynne—he holds the rank of General in the army. His address is ‘General Gwynne, K.L.D., King’s Mews, London.’

“My assumed name is Silas Tomkyn Comberbach, 15th, or King’s Reg. of Light Dragoons, G. Troop. My number I do not know—it is of no import. The bounty I received was six guineas and a half; but a light horseman’s bounty is a mere lure. It is expended for him in things which he must have had without a bounty—gaiters, a pair of leather breeches, stable jacket and shell; horse-cloth, surcingle, watering bridle, brushes, and the long etcetera of military accoutrement. I *enlisted* the 2nd of December, 1793, was attested and sworn on the 4th. I am at present nurse to a sick man, and shall, I believe, stay at Henley another week. There will be a large draught from our regiment to complete our troops abroad. The men were picked out to-day. I suppose I am not one—being a very indocile equestrian. Farewell!

S. T. COLERIDGE.

“February 20th, 1794.

Our regiment are at Reading and Hounslow, and

Maidenhead and Kensington—our headquarters, Reading, Berks. The commanding officer there, Lieutenant Hopkinson, our adjutant.

“TO CAPTAIN JAMES COLERIDGE,  
*Tiverton, Devonshire.*”

It is rather strange that Captain Ogle, who, according to Coleridge's daughter, Miss Mitford, and other vouchers, passed for his only liberator, should not have been so much as named in this letter. It fell to the brother to exert himself for the unhappy dragoon. Samuel was granted his dismissal on the 10th of April, 1794, on the plea of respect for his position in life, and for his relations. He departed gaily, though not without emotion. His friends fetched him in a coach, the officers shook hands with him, and his astonished comrades gave him three cheers, as, with tears in his eyes, he drove away. He now returned to Cambridge, where the summer term had just begun. The whole episode was characteristic of his future doings.

The authorities of Cambridge received him with a kindness which in the end proved beneficial to the Church. He was censured by Dr. Pearce in the presence of the assembled Fellows;\* and that was his sole punishment. Nor were his misdemeanours even reported to Christ's Hospital, though those of the brothers Le Grice had been carefully made known there.

\* “1794, Apr. 12. Coleridge admonitus est per Magistrum in praesentia Sociorum.” (Adm. B.)

Coleridge found himself recognised and treated as a man of extraordinary ability. Even those who, like the author of the prize poems and future Archdeacon, Wrangham, lamented his principles, admired his genius. For all that he took no pleasure in his college, and laid no value on its privileges. He withdrew generally from the prescribed attendance at chapel, and preached up Deism.

We find him again on the move in June—the summer term only expired on the 6th of July—this time taking a cheerful excursion in Wales. His companion was a fellow-scholar, by name J. Hucks—a tolerable poet and great lover of nature—an enemy equally to atheism, and to all government; full of interest and pity for the people, a gentle-hearted hater of tyrants, who in every old castle saw only a shameful monument of feudal oppression. We have to thank him for a short account of this tour in the form of letters. (*'A Pedestrian Tour through North Wales.'* London, 1795.)

These two plodded about together in Rousseau fashion, "exploring the hidden beauties" of nature by the ingenuity of man "unmechanized," and when they met dancing peasants (which we should think was seldom!) they thought sorrowfully "of that happy age when all mankind were brothers." Each carried sufficient clothes for three months in a knapsack. It was a regular escape from Europe's over-whitewashed culture. Not but what they would have preferred some primordial American forest.



Such an extension of their plans was really proposed by Coleridge, at their first halt in Oxford. For this purpose his old school-fellow Allen, the sharer of his love secrets, whom he found installed in University College, made him acquainted with a fellow-enthusiast of kindred energy, prepared not only to dream about such a Utopia, but to put it into practice ; with no less a man, namely, than Robert Southey. Southey was born in Bristol, Chatterton's native city, and seemed to have equally inherited the poverty and the enthusiasm, the hatred for prince and priest, the love of nature, and the romance of his unhappy predecessor. He was about two years younger than Coleridge, and like him had been placed in a strict London school, and finally expelled from it, because in a school periodical called "The Flagellant"—founded for the express purpose—he had boldly proved from the Fathers of the Church that flogging was an invention of the Devil! The Oxford masters were preparing him for the career of a theologian, but he detested their intolerance and pedantry. He had already written a drama on Wat Tyler's insurrection, preaching the most modern communism under this mediæval form ; also an epic poem on the Maid of Orleans, which gave him opportunity to contrast the French love of freedom with the despotic proclivities of his own countrymen. As a conscientious Freethinker, and a poetic Godwinian, he now welcomed his kindred spirit from Cambridge, with a frank look, a ready hand and ostentatiously uncut

hair. No time was lost in swearing eternal friendship with a heartiness which now prevailed between the leading poets on both sides of the Channel; each, after the fashion of Goethe and Schiller, contributing to complete the other, and each equally captivating the other. The most romantic friendship quickly ensued.

Next followed the plan of a "Pantisocracy"—the new-coined name for an equally new-coined society. This society, which was to be founded in America upon conditions of ideal equality, was the first point of their bond. Neither party had the patience to allow any time for the natural progress of the human race, or for the work of future generations. The ideal was to be at once converted into the real. Even the English Radical was pronounced too phlegmatic to proceed at the desired pace. Coleridge compared "these parliamentary oscillators" to ducks, who at one moment boldly lift their heads above the mill-pond, and the next moment, at the least word of the minister, plunge them into the blackest mud below. It is true the French Revolution had been victorious, but it was not to be denied that the tyranny of the king had been replaced by one in the name of Freedom of a still worse kind. It was all very well to respect the principle which Robespierre had represented, but his guillotine was a horror. Europe also was still too steeped in the traditions of despotism to answer their purposes. Why attempt to break the shackles of oppression by means

sure to be slow and tedious, and probably bloody, when an undefiled region lay ready for them on the other side of the Atlantic? Southey had for years longed for a hut in America, and Coleridge now proposed to found a colony somewhat after the fashion of one named "Platonopolis," a model city, which his old friend Plotinus had with imperial aid endeavoured to establish in Campania, in the third century after Christ. In this transatlantic Paradise there were to be no exclusive privileges, no private property, no public guardianship, and therefore no selfishness, no sin, and no violation of laws. The new order of things of course required a new name. Democracy implied a previous division into upper and lower classes, which was exactly what they wanted to avoid; and hence a term was created which for years after remained the watchword of the two friends.

The way in which they initiated their propaganda was significant of their different natures. After three weeks' stay in Oxford, Coleridge began his tour of fraternity. Taking a circuitous route, he marched round the coast of North Wales, hobnobbed with hospitable royalists, and talked politics over a glass of beer; scribbled verses of revolutionary moral on the window-panes of wayside inns, and fraternised demonstratively with the unwashed. In his admiration for nature, also, he was so careless of his own safety as to be surprised in a fit of absence by the rising tide on the shore of Beaumaris, and only just rescued in time by the fishermen, who sheltered him,

cold and wet, in their huts. This episode he celebrated in an outburst, addressed to the Rev. W. J. Hort :

“ . . . . Freedom’s undivided Dell,  
Where Toil and Health with mellowed Love shall dwell,  
Far from folly, far from men,  
In the rude romantic glen.”

Southey, on the other hand, acted and provided. He gained the sympathy of Allen. He won the adhesion of George Burnett, a farmer’s son, who was also preparing for a clerical life in Balliol College. These two shook the dust off their feet as they left the university after the summer term, and discussed their project on their way home. A few cheerful hours devoted to labour in the forenoon were to suffice to earn them board and lodging. Trees would have to be felled ; the trunks to build the house, the branches for firing. The art of handling such primitive implements as axe and plough would present no difficulty ; and for cooking and other housework, each emigrant was to take a wife with him. By far the larger portion of the day was to be reserved for social intercourse, and literary production. With such discussions Southey beguiled the way to Bath, where his mother and aunt resided, and where he immediately ordered a stout linen coat, an article which, as the son of a linen-draper, he may be supposed to have understood. His mother and brother also entered readily into the plan. Nothing was wanted except the pecuniary means for the journey, purchase of land, and of agricultural implements ; his mother had no money, and his

aunt closed her door against him. Accordingly, in the first week of August 1794, he went to Bristol, where Coleridge had just arrived, in order to consult with him as to their further steps. That miserable money which had hitherto so persistently eluded their possession—and the use of which, with the utmost contempt, they now purposed for ever to renounce—proved an inexorable barrier to further proceedings. Romance knocked her head against the wall of the matter of fact.

If they could but persuade some people of good means to join them! The locality was not unfavourable to this hope. Bristol, with its 100,000 inhabitants (London had then only 651,000, Liverpool 47,000, and Berlin 134,000), was the second largest city in England, and, situated at the mouth of the Avon, carried on a lucrative trade with Ireland, Scotland and America. In matters of religion great toleration prevailed, which stood the Unitarians in good stead. Political freedom, also, was so pronounced, that in October 1793, the people twice burnt the gates of the Custom House; and despite the interference of the military, successfully resisted the imposition of an excise duty on articles of consumption. At the same time, the character of society was literary; theatre and music were patronised, five newspapers and several circulating libraries supported. A number of authors and authoresses also resided in the city; among whom Mrs. Hannah More took the most prominent place. Southey had a few good friends here; one of them, Robert Lovell—the

somewhat eccentric son of a wealthy Quaker—was an admirer of Chatterton, and himself an author; and through Lovell, Coleridge became known to Joseph Cottle, a young publisher, well-to-do, good, harmless, and vain; a writer of memoirs, a poet of semi-religious and heroic subjects. The friends met with a friendly reception, but Lovell alone declared himself in favour of the proposed emigration, and the expense could not be laid on him only; so the chief difficulty remained unsolved.

The requisite wives were more easily obtained. A poor pastrycook, of the name of Fricker, had left a widow and six children—excellent people, not devoid of pride, whom, it is true, no one credited with any brilliant qualities, but of whom Byron only, in thoughtless joke, ever said a disparaging word. They lived in a quiet way upon Redcliffe Hill, at the south-east end of the city, directly opposite the slender Gothic tower and the churchyard of St. Mary Redcliffe, where Chatterton used to indulge his mediæval dreams. The five daughters supported themselves in highly respectable fashion by needlework and teaching, and one tried her fortune as an actress. Mary was already engaged to Lovell, and Southey was in love with Edith—how tempting it was to Coleridge to strengthen the tie of friendship with the connection of a brother-in-law! Sarah, or as Coleridge pleased to call her, Sara, was the eldest and reckoned the handsomest. She was a brunette, also nearly two years older than he; nor was she distinguished for any

particular culture ; but she had taught herself singing, showed an active, ready disposition, and was altogether a straightforward, honest girl. Little deviations from drawing-room manners only gave her an extra charm. In the memoir of her daughter, she is described with warm affection as the pattern of feminine freshness and practical sense. Coleridge's mother would never have included her among "the harpsichord young ladies." It was not long before the twenty-two-year-old student had approached her at least half-way in courtship. Southey was astonished. In Oxford, Mary Evans had still been mistress of his heart. In June 1794, Coleridge had written, in verses called "The sigh!"—

"Though in distant climes I roam,  
A wanderer from my native home,  
Thy image may not banished be ;  
Still, Mary! still I sigh for thee."

In the meanwhile, under the pretext of prudence, though not without a coquettish assumption of compassion, Mary had broken the tie between them. On his pedestrian tour he had accidentally, as he maintained, turned his steps to Wrexham, where her married sister, with whom he corresponded, resided ; and while standing in a fit of absence at the inn window, he suddenly saw both the sisters pass by. In his own words, " I sickened, and well-nigh fainted, but instantly retired within." " The ladies themselves both started and gave a short cry, almost a faint shriek." Then he wrote on the 22nd July to a college friend at Cambridge

“She lives, but no longer for me—perhaps already the bride of another, and fresh from his embraces.” Thus, with a new vacancy in his heart, the ardent young poet arrived at Bristol, and crossed the threshold of the Frickers’ house. To all appearance he had but few more months to spend in England. Sara admired him, as many another had done, and was too much a child of nature to conceal her feelings. She was even ready to go with him to America, and Heine’s “old story” was revived with a few slight changes. “In the woodbine tower she owned her love, and let me kiss my own warm tear from off her glowing cheek.” Now he was all ready to depart; i.e., as soon as money was obtained, and the now approaching winter over; and the voyage was fixed for the month of March. Thus the most extravagant act of his life gave him the companion of it.

The Pantisocratic mania of brotherly union became meanwhile so catching that Burnett now came forward to demand the hand of a fourth Miss Fricker; Miss Martha, however, had too much sense and self-respect to consent to engage herself in a hurry. She did not intend to lend herself as a performer in this epidemic of matrimony, but determined to be chosen for herself alone. She accordingly contemptuously declined the offer, and preferred to die an old maid.

With love thus clamorous with three couples, the question of the money took an acute form. The three poetic swains held serious counsel together. Did they not carry bills of acceptance on the nibs of their own pens?



Southey was ready to publish his "Joan of Arc," and Coleridge his "Imitations from the Modern Latin Poets," both by subscription. Nor was this enough. A still more interesting work in a higher region of interest was proposed, and no sooner proposed than carried out in strict pantisocratic partnership. This was a tragedy on the Fall of Robespierre. It was probably the author of Wat Tyler who had the credit of this idea, for Coleridge, as he once owned, had no inclination in that line. The fact of Robespierre's fall was itself not more than a month old, having occurred on the 27th July, 1794; and the majority of the *dramatis personæ* were still living on the banks of the Seine. But such actuality was as welcome to the Coleridgian school of romance as platonism, or fables, or any other conditions unconventional enough to allure the instinctive elements of poetry. Had not the very execution of Louis XVI. been already woven by an Irishman of the name of Preston into a pathetic tragedy, and that even in the very year 1793 when it happened? In order to insure a freshness of performance on a par with that of the material, the three poets decided that the three acts—the first by Coleridge, the second by Southey, and the third by Lovell—should be delivered within four-and-twenty hours. Coleridge accordingly brought a part of his task by the next evening, though requiring several days for its completion. Southey, the fertile writer that was to be, accomplished the whole within the time; and Lovell did the same by the third act; only unfortunately it did not agree with

the two others, and had to be entirely recast by Southey. A dedication to Mrs. Hannah More was now added, and the work was complete. The consistency of the piece was sufficiently preserved, and for that they were indebted to the revolutionary papers which the authors had largely consulted, and whence they drew that especial conception of Robespierre, which represented him as great in his object but unscrupulous in his means; as "a tyrant for his country's freedom"; with many a tirade of immovable confidence in the proceedings of the Revolution. As to the artistic unity of the piece, there was not much to be said. The characters, namely, which Coleridge inaugurated, were not carried on by Southey even in the rudest outlines, and one can only admire the prudence of the Bristol publisher who declined to accept the proffered copyright.

At the beginning of September, the continuation of the pecuniary dilemma took Coleridge to London, and thence, after a short stay, back to Cambridge. In both places, as far as in him lay, he exerted himself in the furtherance of the pantisocratic scheme. In London he renewed his acquaintance with "Charles"—the name by which Lamb was known to him,—and raved so passionately about America that Lamb first laughed at him, and then took flight from the anger he had excited in this "fool of a genius" ('Southey's Correspondence'). Lamb, however, made him acquainted with George Dyer, once a Christ's Hospital boy, who, following in the steps of Junius, Howard, and the "Rights of Man," had

just fired off a daring pamphlet against the inordinate sinecures of the upper classes, the misery and mismanagement of prisons and hospitals, the utter want of education in the poor, and the barbarous punishments sanctioned by our laws ('Complaints of the Poor,' 1793). From Dyer he received words of the utmost encouragement, but no promise of coalition. Then he visited his old haunts in the Hospital, shook Favell and the younger Le Grice by the hand, both of whom stood at the head of the school, and won them over to pantisocracy; finding them willing disciples in all respects, "*φρενδῶτατοι μετὰ φρένδους*," only without that indispensable article—money. He fell in, also, with a highly intelligent former school-fellow, who had spent five years in America, and gave him much information as to the necessary conditions; twelve men, namely, and £2000 would comfortably suffice to found their colony. Nor were the mosquitos so bad even as the English gnats; while in point of climate, landscape beauty, and safety from the inroads of wild Indians, the banks of the Susquehanna—word of magical power!—were eminently fitted for purposes of colonisation. Literary men also were in request, and could earn plenty of money.

But Coleridge found it was as difficult to obtain a publisher for the "Fall of Robespierre" on the banks of the Thames as on those of the Avon. He succeeded better in Cambridge, probably through the liberality of a certain Mr. Martin, with whom he had been in familiar correspondence during his late travels, and to whom the

little work was now dedicated "as a small testimony of my grateful attachment." It was noticed sparingly, though not unkindly, and we hear of no profit from it. This, however, which was to have taken him across the ocean, eventually opened to him his long and fruitful career as a European publicist. But no one could be induced to emigrate from Cambridge—people had all something to lose.

Far from learning wisdom from all these disappointments, the young enthusiast may be said to have destroyed the bridges behind him. Carlyle denies him the quality of boldness, but Coleridge was only too bold, even foolhardy, and immoderate in the love of adventure. He was now in the last term of his Cambridge course, and nothing stood between him and his Bachelor's degree but an examination which no pupil of Boyer's had cause to dread. In truth he had satisfied his examiners often enough. That which barred his way to the examination room was not doubts of scholarship, but scruples of religion. The subscription to the Thirty-nine Articles, which, as a matter of course, he had given at his first entry, he was now, as a confirmed heretic, too honest to repeat; nor as a future American citizen would he require it.

Dr. Pearce, in a long conversation with him, exerted every argument of common-sense and persuasion to convince him of the absurd and ruinous nature of his plans; but Coleridge only answered drily that the Doctor had mistaken the matter altogether. Even before the last

day of the autumn term (16th December) Coleridge again turned his back on the friendly cloisters of Jesus College, and this time for good. Twenty years later, in his 'Biographia Literaria,' he expressed the bitterest regret for this step, and earnestly advises all young authors to secure by the means of some benefice the power of material independence. At this time, however, he was in a delirium of youthful vigour and hope.

Even months later it was not too late to recall the step. Dr. Pearce gave him the benefit of the whole winter term for his return, before removing, as he was bound to do, his name from the college boards. Finally, he obtained for him one reprieve more, up to the 14th of June, 1795. At the same time he informed Coleridge's former tutor at Christ's Hospital in the most considerate terms that Coleridge had departed no one knew whither, but that no charge of misconduct could be brought against him. The Committee of Christ's Hospital held counsel on the question on the 22nd of April. Meanwhile the fact that the said S. T. Coleridge had left Cambridge a few days before the expiration of the last October term was confirmed beyond all doubt. The continuance of his Exhibition from the Hospital was consequently in some jeopardy. One can only bear witness to the forbearance and patience with which the authorities acted on this occasion. Coleridge meanwhile had come to London, where he openly compared his Alma Mater to a pack of wolves, plunged into the revolutionary

circles, and maintained a political creed far too absurd to stand before the growing experience of life. A reaction was sure to follow.

*Pari passu* with his development as man may be traced also his development as a poet, in which respect a still more decided antipathy to the regular rules and methods, still higher platonic flights, and still more romantic ideas became evident.

Much of this was owing to his Cambridge friends. He had felt that his lines called "The Sigh," so dear to him in Christ's Hospital, no longer harmonised with the comfortable and dignified conditions of the university life, and that the bliss of sentimental emotion was simply morbid. His natural cheerfulness, therefore, no longer disguised itself in elegiac utterances; he aimed at a deeper sympathy with the early poets, a higher appreciation of the learned character of the "Penseroso," a truer imitation of the modest independence and dignified fancy of Milton. At the same time, his friends, both new and old, shared his aversion to the classicism of Pope. Valentine Le Grice, in his commemoration speech, affirmed "that the reign of Queen Anne had been improperly called the Augustan age of English poetry. That but little that breathes of love, beauty, poetic joy and inspiration was to be found in Pope, who addressed himself principally to the head; "and yet that the end of poetry is to delight, to ennoble, to elevate, and improve the heart. Let us therefore contemplate nature with the eye of Thomson, stimulate our energy by Gray,

awaken our finer feelings by Bowles, lose ourselves in sympathy with Burns, and enlarge every higher sentiment with Cowper ; and then let us, if we will, lament that poetic genius has departed with Pope. The Augustan age is not over, but only now approaching." Middleton—a lover of Burns—joined by Frennd now swelled the chorus by expatiating on the loss of simplicity and truth on the part of our English poets, by their false imitation of the classic models. Surrounded thus with companions of congenial opinions, Coleridge's self-confidence only increased, as he felt himself borne on the uprising wave of a new and aspiring period. He became severer in judgment towards those writers of the eighteenth century who had hitherto been his models, and turned further back to the paths of beauty traced by the Renaissance.

As regards the lyrical landscape school, he even began gradually to take a cooler view of Bowles' merits. On receiving a new edition of that poet, he agreed that the fresh pieces it contained, especially the "Elegy written at Matlock," retained his wonted dignity, tenderness and sublimity, but that the alterations made in his old favourites exhibited only perverted taste, and false sensibility. The more implicitly, therefore, did he commit himself to the guidance of Milton, not only in details, but in general tone. Leaving the gloomy regions of Wertherism, he turned to the bright and dignified Arcadia of the "Allegro," "Penseroso," and "Comus"; with its blooming myrtles and iridescent sky, its silvery streams,

and flowery plains 'gemmed with dew-drops. Instead of suffering or even sympathising fellow-creatures, he surrounded himself with dancing fairies. This change is most distinctly seen in two poems, the result of his holiday time at Ottery (1793). The one is entitled "The Songs of the Pixies," kind little elves, who, according to the Devonshire folk-lore, dwell in a grotto luxuriantly overgrown on the banks of the Otter. To this grotto, one summer's day, he led a band of young damsels, one of whom, conspicuous by her fine figure and clear colourless complexion, was chosen to be the Fairy Queen. So far the preface informs us. Whether this was a real event, or a fancy conjured up in remembrance of his beloved Mary, who shall say? At all events, the fairy scene which floated before his imagination was invoked in honour of some pure and graceful "lady," after the manner of the "Comus." "Lusty labour-scouting Sorrow" welcomes the lady with a joyous "Good-morning," just as "Mirth" does in the "Allegro." In the sultry noonday the pixies retire to their grotto, lulled by the hum of wild bees (see "Il Penseroso," line 142), and in the evening they dance on a violet bank by the side of the stream (see "L'Allegro," line 96). In the night they stand by the ebony throne of the mysterious goddess, from whom dark dreams proceed, and finally they do homage to the earthly beauty chosen to be their queen (again from "Comus"). All these coincidences taken separately prove but little, but considered together they are highly characteristic of Coleridge's method of study.



A pendant to the last, in a minor key,—as the “Penseroso” to the “Allegro,”—are “Lines on an Autumnal Evening” (1794). The poet here recalls the sweet scenery of his home. The sun has set in amber-glowing floods of light. A maiden, with coy bashfulness glides o’er the green, wanders alone through the moonlit night, and sings to the breeze. It is the opening scene in “Comus”—not conceived as a reality, but as a sad recollection. Transported with ecstasy, the dreamer raises his enchanted wand—from this time a frequent feature in his lyrical poetry—and adjures the spirits of Love to follow the maid. Continuing thus :

“Were mine the power of Proteus, changeful god,  
A flower-entangled arbour I would seem,  
To shield my love from noontide’s sultry beam.

\* \* \* \* \*

When twilight stole across the fading vale,  
To fan my love I’d be the evening gale.”

In all this we see an avowed paraphrase of the Greek epigrams—an isolated instance on Coleridge’s part of an imitation of the classic writers, though not in the pseudo-classical style.

What may be called the erotic or love poetry of Coleridge shows itself, as may be seen, regularly combined with a landscape lyric; seldom does it appear alone. He was not so passionately constituted as Burns or Byron, but more pensive. Of all his productions at Christ’s Hospital, his “Genevieve” comes nearest to a love-song. And here we may instance two regular

attempts in this direction ; both in honour of Miss Nesbitt. If Bowles was his model on that occasion, Spenser—the seraphic Elizabethan, whose influence was universal in the eighteenth century—was his inspiration now. “The Rose” is a playful toying with Cupid—often described by Spenser and his followers as a mischievous wight, and sometimes placed in the lap of Venus, or in a rose, or on the bosom of the Beloved. Close on this poem follows that called “The Kiss.” The blushing maiden is compared to a rose, surrounded with enraptured spirits. She lends herself with tender coyness to their adoration—a conception which points to the betrothal scene in Spenser’s “Epithalamium.” Love is here no exclusive exchange of emotion and consolation—as it appeared to him in Christ’s Hospital and in Bowles’ works—but a tale of joy, not without a sensuous charm.

At the same time he had become weary of the hymn-like lyrics of his former teacher, Gray, who had too much rhetoric, and too little intuitive feeling for him. To describe youth and virtue, it is not enough to write in large letters. Nor did he less criticise Dr. Erasmus Darwin’s imitation of “Ovid” in the “Loves of the Plants” (1789), profusely as they were surrounded with flowers and sunshine, silver and honey, producing, in Coleridge’s words, the effect of a “glittering palace of ice.” In criticism of both these authors—Gray and Darwin—both of whom still evinced strong tendencies for pseudo-classicality, he had already assisted a Devonshire man in the first Cambridge vacation to contribute an essay, now

lost, to a Devonshire Literary Society. Our Plotinist, on the other hand, felt his own power to act very differently upon the heart. Exactly at the period of his greatest degradation—when he served as a bad recruit in the mews at Reading—he was irresistibly seized with the impulse to pour forth his views of life in a mighty hymn. It was just the time—the 21st January, 1794—when the offer of a treaty of peace with the French Republic had been rejected by the House of Lords on the grounds expressed by the Duke of Portland, namely, that the preservation of the Christian religion was dependent on the continuation of the war. Coleridge, as he then felt, could conceive nothing more irreligious than the fierce clashing of arms; and to preach a crusade against a proposal of peace appeared to him nothing short of blasphemy. What a different spirit of religion he gathered from the beauty of creation; from the sufferings of “the mild Galilean”; from the thoughts of such reasoners as Priestley, Hartley, and Berkeley! He burned to announce a gospel of infinite love—divine and human—to his utilitarian, short-sighted, and narrow-minded fellow-men. And thus he began the loftiest work he ever attempted, his “Religious Musings.” He travailed with it for a year, completing it on Christmas Day 1794, and then spent more than another year in filing and polishing it, before he gave it to the world. The art with which he composed it was no longer borrowed from Gray, but from Spenser and Milton.

But while Milton influenced more the poet's method

of composition, Spenser gave his inspiration a higher flight. He had celebrated "Heavenly Beauty" and "Heavenly Love" in strains not merely epic, but of such hymn-like charm as to carry Coleridge away with a similar hunger of the soul to gaze upon the Divine, and with a like overpowering sense of impotence to embody his wish in words. Spenser had also interwoven his art with platonic theories, and Coleridge followed his lead. Spenser's "Pure intelligence from God inspyred" is closely related to the "Monads of the Infinite Mind" in the "Religious Musings." The scholar even went further than his master, and introduced oracularly so much high-flown neo-platonism in his work, that without some preparatory study it is hardly to be understood. The poet of the Renaissance had observed time and measure in his work; he of the Romantic school overleapt both in his resistance to the narrowness of the allotted limits. Spenser's literary movement was therefore continuous in kind, whilst Coleridge's sounded like rebellion. We have only to place before us Pope's "Essay on Man"—a work of similar tendency, but devoid of charm from the very fact of its incessant striving at correct clearness and epigrammatic point, to say nothing of its imitators—to understand that even the ecstatic obscurity of the "Religious Musings" finds historical vindication in the period to which it belongs. The *Monthly Review*, 1796, judged rightly: "Often uncouth and verging on extravagance, but in general striking and impressive."

This predilection for Spenser is still more pronounced in the changes and additions which Coleridge made to his "Monody on the Death of Chatterton," October 1794. In the first version, which, as is well known, he composed under the iron rule of Boyer, he takes Butler, the author of *Hudibras*, the wrestler "'gainst the bigot foe," as the companion in the fate of the forsaken young poet. Now in his alterations he changes him for Spenser, "that gentlest bard divine"; a heightening of imagination is also here and there evident. At first he says of Chatterton prosily enough "he bids the debtor's eye know rest"; this he changes for the far finer expression "he gives the blue sky to many a prisoner's eye." In the descriptions he mixes something uncanny, even where not suitable. Such is the allegory of "Affection meek, her bosom bare, and wildly pale her cheeks," who stands by the side of the self-murderer. Another addition also is the image of the minstrel

"in Inspiration's eager hour,  
When most the big soul feels the maddening power."

The cheerful scenery of the Avon in which he first saw the light is changed in this version to

"these caverns roaming o'er,  
Round which the screaming sea-gulls soar."

These are forerunners of the elemental and ghostly pictures of the "Ancient Mariner."

In the walk of Tragedy, also, Coleridge sought to follow the steps of the great master of the sixteenth

century, as may be seen in the first act of the "Fall of Robespierre."

The art of tragedy, at the beginning of the eighteenth century, was deeply entangled in the stiff regularity of French classicism, and had since then, despite many attempts to renovate herself in the national life, attained no real technical freedom. The tragedy of common life, by transferring the savage awards of the courts of justice to the stage, was a reform as to practice, but not as to art. Shakespeare, the never-forgotten, had again been held up to honour by Garrick in the London theatres, but his pieces, though played with permanent success, were only superficially understood, and only in detail imitated. The Romantic school, without developing much refinement of form, had shown a tendency for sensational materials. The best literary drama of the time—Walpole's "Mysterious Mother"—treats of a double incest; and, as novelties for the stage, versions of robber and ghost stories were in fashion. Attempts at striking effects were made, but only by the coarsest means. Coleridge also announced in his preface that he intended to develop the chief characters "on a vast scale of horror." He even clung in the chief respects of style and composition to the old traditions of French tragedy, making his personages all declaim with the same pomposity—portraying individual character only by general outline and description; introducing the origin of the conspiracy against Robespierre, and therefore the tying of the knot, before the beginning of the piece—and

thence with utmost concentration deducing the inevitable catastrophe. At the same time, he shows himself far more Shakespearian than any of his predecessors in the grouping of his personages. From his tenth year he had been familiar with all Shakespeare's plays, and the story of Robespierre involuntarily recalled that of Julius Cæsar. The wretched French lawyer was modelled from the Roman Emperor, his notorious corruption and cowardice exchanged for a noble fearlessness, and himself converted from a tyrannical braggart into a tyrannical hero. His accomplices were, after the same fashion, turned into *pendants* of Brutus and Cassius—the one in the form of Tallien, a weak, nervous idealist, incapable of keeping the secret of the plot from his wife, but in some respects imitating the apparently frivolous Antony, and, like him, quick to seize the right moment; while the proud and envious Cassius, never more at home than in the din of the elements, serves as model for Legendre. Between the opposing parties enters a kind of Cicero, timid and inwardly insignificant, but necessary and important from his influence over the mob. His name is Barrière; probably because the real bearer of that name held back undecided to the last. The greatest transformation, however, is seen in Adelaide, Tallien's wife, who even in prison had urged her husband to the overthrow of Robespierre; while in the play she figures as an anxious and uneasy Portia. All these modern Parisians were disguised without ceremony in the dress of the Elizabethan Romans. It was an arbitrary arrangement;

but for all that must be hailed as a decided step towards a more national drama.

Coleridge did not display much originality of creative power during his university time, but rather an original choice of models. The coolness with which he borrowed went so far as to transplant a fragment by Favell *verbatim* into his "Monody on Chatterton," without any allusion to the author. This was perhaps from forgetfulness; more probably from a communistic feeling as regards literary property. Poetry was to him, as he said later of Truth, a kind of divine ventriloquist. He enquired not whence the voice came, so long as it did come. Still, this was not from that intellectual poverty, or the desire for appropriation, which in a parallel case, would have been attributed to an ordinary man, but rather from a superabundance of ideas, for the paternity of which it was no easy task to find chapter and verse; and from a high tide of inspiration which carelessly swept away all paltry misgivings and considerations. The many-sidedness at which he instinctively aimed had mystified his understanding with dubious theories. This aim rendered him unfit for any serious mode of earning his bread, reduced him hereafter as a grown man to great misery, but meanwhile helped to inflate and inflame his genius.

"Was im Leben uns verdriesst,  
Man im Bilde gern genießt."

—Goethe.



## CHAPTER III.

## PANTISOCRACY. BRISTOL. (1795-1796.)

“O mark those smiling tears that swell  
The opened Rose.”

—*Lines written at Shurton Bars.*

In London—At “Salutation and Cat”—To a Young Ass—Rise of Sympathy for the Poor and Oppressed—Note-book—In Bristol—Lectures—Pitt—Thomas Poole—Josiah Wake—Benjamin Hobhouse—Dr. Beddoes—Religious Doubts—Unitarians—“The Devil’s Thoughts”—Analysis of “Religious Musings”—Schiller’s “Robbers”—Marriage—Life at Clevedon—“The Eolian Harp”—Breach with Southey—Canvass for *Watchman*—Collective Poems—Political Opinions—“Bread-and-cheese Question”—“Fire, Famine, and Slaughter”—Lloyd—Mysticism—Nether Stowey.

COLERIDGE had staked his future upon his plan of Pantisocracy. How, first of all the idea, and then the semi-disappointment, and finally the whole affair reacted on his life and muse, becomes the chief question of these two richly developing years.

As was to be expected, the fugitive student turned up again at his friend Southey’s, and at the Frickers’. But the mode of intercourse was thus arranged. It took seven-and-a-half hours to get from Cambridge to London by the mail-coach southwards, in order thence to branch off westwards to Bristol; and once in London there was no end of friends, excitements, and opportuni-

ties of profitable business, which detained him for weeks. He took up his quarters in Newgate Street, therefore, near Christ's Hospital, at an inn called the "Salutation and Cat," where, without discrimination as to the company, he, as usual, dealt out his ideas with such irresistible fascination of language, that the host offered him free commons if he would but continue to supply the talk. Here he made acquaintance with the celebrated Godwin; though little prepossessed by his hooked nose, or the conceited stiffness of his manner. Here also he contracted relations with the Press, and those with the most radical organ of the day, the *Morning Chronicle*. In this paper, December 1794, and January 1795, appeared a series of sonnets on the chief characters—political and literary—of the time. On the Earl of Stanhope, who represented the Republican party; on Sheridan and Erskine, the great orators in the cause of freedom; on La Fayette and Kosciusko, the great champions for freedom; on Priestley, Bowles, and Southey. Finally, on Pitt, "the dark slinker," "who kissed his country with Iscariot lips"; and on Burke, who from love of ostentation, though from no corrupt motive, had taken a position among the king's adherents. Under the conviction that he had only a few months longer to spend in Europe, Coleridge began to work from day to day, and to live from hand to mouth; and as the decision with regard to his future was more and more delayed, this precarious mode of provision became a fatal habit.

People justly talk of the waste of genius. And yet it

must be admitted that the bubbles which he lightly blew into the air had their significance. The Sonnets just mentioned, empty as they now appear, and severely, in respect of their literary merit, as he afterwards condemned them, contain the most burning and direct effusions of anger that the English lyrical school of the eighteenth century ever poured forth. These are no longer the satirical pin-pricks, nor the didactic elegies, nor the rhetorical school exercises of the modern would-be classical poets; nor the manly, and national trumpet-notes of the Scotch peasant-minstrel; but they are rather fanatical "Abdiel warnings," addressed to the foes of freedom, and *tête-montée* glorifications of humanity's struggles. With one foot, as he thought, on board ship, he wished for the last time, and with all his might, to let corrupt Europe hear the truth. The pensive Bowles, though still honoured, was only adopted as a pattern of metrical form; no longer as a master; in substance the mighty sonnets of Milton, to all appearance, became his models. Like that great master, he begins with an outbreak of the liveliest emotion, and especially with an apostrophe; then he gives free utterance to his thoughts, without much regard to stanza and measure; culminating either in the joys of heaven or in the horrors of eternal perdition. Melodious softness is replaced by recitative "storm and stress"; amorous whinings by rude inspiration—the genuine fruits of the Revolution!

As for the intellectual seed which he strewed verbally broadcast, in the smoky, sandy ale-house, part of it fell

on good ground, and grew beyond all expectation. Lamb appeared there as often as he could get away from his dreary desk in the East India House, from the cribbage-board of his old father, and from the side of his sick mother. Coleridge now recited to him Bowles' sweet sonnets; now his own foaming rhapsodies; now descanted to him on the calm, self-contained God of Plato and Spinoza, "of whose omniscient and all-spreading love aught to implore were impotence of mind." To him also Coleridge sent his "Religious Musings," after he had worked himself stupid over them, accompanied by lines which show in the liveliest manner both the oppressed condition and the lofty interests of Lamb. Coleridge looked down upon his "Charles," as he always called him, with benevolent sympathy and almost paternal protection. And Charles looked up to him with childlike admiration, and touching fidelity, and was never weary of revelling in the recollections of those glorious ale-house days. For at Coleridge's side he perceived that he also possessed the gift of imagination; like him also he essayed his powers in imitations of Bowles and of "Comus"; like him he wrote a sonnet on Mrs. Siddons, which in each case was so entirely the joint work of both, that when published, each took his friend's work for his own. The soul of the little, stammering, lonely writer—also, but in moderation, a Unitarian, and also of the Romantic school,—now began to put forth bud and flower. From Coleridge, Lamb imbibed the love of poetry and beauty, and to him he dedicated his collective poems with that artless acknow-

ledgment. Coleridge himself was probably surprised by such a comprehensive tribute of gratitude. "With his own inward lightnings blind," as Shelley so admirably characterised him, he was wont to pour forth the abundance of his intellect without any particular regard as to whether, or how far, he was understood. In this way he doubtless accomplished as much to which he had hardly given a thought, as he left undone of that on which he had long pondered.

Quite occupied as he was with that dream of universal equality and fraternity, which he believed to be near of fulfilment, he hit upon an idea, which, to this day, is brought up as a reproach against him, though in itself highly significant as a specimen of what may be called the Democratic side of English poetry. This was his lines "To a young ass, its mother being tethered near":

"Innocent Foal! Thou poor, despised forlorn,  
I hail thee brother, spite of the fool's scorn."

This thought (instead of being ridiculous) has a deep and serious foundation. The more the landscape poets of what may be called the century of humanity penetrated into the secrets of earth and air, the more they sympathised with the lower creatures of nature, and demanded for all and each a fitting lot. First arose the sympathy for the oppressed votaries of literature. The "poor devil" had hitherto been known to his higher poetical brethren only as a kind of philosophical ascetic, or as a merry dog—as an aimless blockhead, or as a bad

fellow. Thomson, in his "Winter" (1726), already describes with sympathy and respect how such a man was frozen in a snow-storm. Goldsmith, in his "Deserted Village" (1770), proceeds to describe the daily misery of a whole parish perishing wretchedly, whilst wealth was held in the hands of the few; Cowper, the pious and energetic poet of the delights of walking (1785), the hater of despots and himself the rearer of hares, by no means confined his sympathy to the harmless poor, but looked also with a gentle eye upon vagabonds and fallen women, as, for instance, in his episode on "Crazy Kate." He even came boldly forward in defence of ill-treated oxen, and hunted game; and as the pious harbinger of the Revolution, announced that "the groans of the Creation shall have an end." In entire independence of Cowper, though borne along on the same tide of the time, we find Burns—himself as good as homeless—compassionating the mouse and the daisy, which his own plough rendered homeless: "I'm truly sorry man's dominion has broken Nature's social union." And here Coleridge took up the strain and bewailed the little foal,

"Meek child of misery,"

whom he would fain have taken with him,

"in the dell  
Of peace and mild equality to dwell."

Coleridge was here probably influenced by Cowper, whom Lamb esteemed highly, and next to whom Lamb him-

self may be placed. A side-thrust also at Sterne's jeering elegy to an ass in his "Sentimental Journey" is not to be mistaken. Sterne had distorted the idea into a joke—Coleridge asserted it with the greater earnestness of conviction. Nor was he satisfied with one protest. A year later (1796) he addressed similar compassion to a blossom in February, and to the first primrose of spring, which Lamb, the admirer of Burns, immediately showed to be of kindred feeling with the little ploughed-up daisy. And again, a year later, Coleridge wrote the lines, "To an unfortunate woman whom the author had known in the days of her innocence,"—"Myrtle leaf, that ill besped, pinest in the gladsome ray." And this feeling it was which found further expression in the carelessly killed, and fearfully revenged albatross of the "Ancient Mariner." It was by no mere chance that Coleridge took up this idea just when he was most under the spell of Pantisocracy. He also carried his friends along with him; Southey supplied him with the half of another Magdalen sonnet—"Pale roamer through the night"—and helped him in an imitation of his own "Crazy Kate," called the "Soldier's Wife." In short, Coleridge unburthened himself of so many poetic sighs over the fate of dancing bears, sucking-pigs and spiders, "poor as the poet himself," that Lamb, half in joke, proposed to him "to open a new form of intercourse with the most despised of the animal and insect race by a series of these poems"—Lamb, who himself, in his later essays, laughed to tears over roast pig! Finally, Wordsworth—in his youth

the direct descendant of Goldsmith and Cowper—had already, before his acquaintance with Coleridge, denied the attributes of Love and Wisdom to all those who could look with contempt on any living creature. Later, he gave full and powerful expression to this feeling in the ballad of the hunted stag (Hart-leap Well), who jumped into the well. Coleridge's lines "To the young ass," accordingly, which on the first view appear an isolated eccentricity, reveal themselves as a deeply-rooted sign of the revolutionary period. If Nature on the part of the Classicists had been treated too superficially and conventionally, she was apprehended by the Romantic school in an almost too individual and living light.

Whatever Coleridge borrowed, he gave back again with interest. In his hands the theory of the equal rights of all creatures took a new aspect. He coloured it with a platonic pantheism. In this respect Taylor had preceded him; having published in London, in 1792, a pamphlet in which he maintained the absolute equality between reasoning and unreasoning creatures, condemned all animal food on the score of the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, and invited attention to the study of the speech of animals. The title of this very seriously-meant curiosity is, "A vindication of the rights of brutes. *Quid rides?*" Coleridge was of the same way of thinking: "Are not cattle and plants permeated through and through with the Divinity who has created all things to form one harmonious whole?" "Are they not all," as he has expressed himself in the "Religious



Musings,"—"monads of the Infinite Mind!" "Does not the same great heart beat in the lowest as in the highest creature? May not the unreasoning creatures, even more than the reasoning ones, retain those inborn ideas, that recollection of a former state, and that foresight of a future one, more clearly than mis-cultivated man?" Hence his question to the "Young ass,"—"Do thy prophetic fears anticipate, meek child of misery, thy future fate?" Hence also his address "To an Infant" in a similar poem of the same time (Pickering, vol. i. p. 80), "untaught, yet wise." How much Plato was in his mind, is shown in a rather later Sonnet on the birth of his first son, in which he expatiates on a Greek sentence from the *Phaedrus*: "Our soul existed already somewhere before it appeared in this human form." He himself, with the naïve and ever childlike nature of a poet, fancied sometimes he could detect the signs of a mysterious past flashing up within him. Mankind have doubtless at all times had a heart for animals and children. Religion has added her sanctifying association—we have only to think of the stable at Bethlehem. The eighteenth century aimed to represent the feelings and speech of the young, as in the namby-pamby "Songs of Innocence," by the demented genius, the painter Blake (1787). But the first to venture on a profound worship of the lispings, croaking, braying, and even mute denizens of earth—the first to introduce them into verse, and to place instinct above reason—was our Platonist. From this time "the suckling child" became one of his favourite

features in tale and song—sometimes as principal in the scene, sometimes in the form of a simile. Southey's children in the "Battle of Blenheim," who know not why this bloody conflict was fought, and the little girl in Wordsworth, who, when asked how many sisters she has, repeats "We are seven," always including the one who is dead, are conceived as evincing higher wisdom than their grown-up companions with their conceited cleverness. Wordsworth finds more understanding in the song of the linnet than in books; in the note of the cuckoo he heard revelations; and in his long ballad, "Peter Bell," he touched on the verge of the ridiculous in the effort to show how much cleverer and more far-seeing an ass could be than its rider. Lloyd, also, a splenetic young poet, whom we shall soon see at Coleridge's side, carried this puerile vein so far that Lamb made himself merry at his expense, and joined him in wishing that he was "once more a child." These examples suffice to show how truly the slightest indications of social movement in the world around him were taken up and expressed by Coleridge. But the same republican spirit which had just transformed the Place de Carrousel into a swamp of human blood would fold its hands before the cradle of a child.

Such ideas, it will be urged, were only the sport of his imagination, though there was method in it; he sung them, but he did not believe them. On the contrary, he sincerely believed them. Of this, his note-book, a thin little duodecimo volume, is a proof. This was begun in

the spring of 1795, and continued with tolerable regularity till 1798. It is a confused collection of psychological remarks and landscape observations ; of quotations from English and classic authors ; of political and religious reflections, subjects for reviews and poems, of which he once read aloud a long list to Cottle ; sometimes only of new-coined, powerful expressions, and suddenly-suggested lines. All these were hastily scribbled, but obviously only destined for his private use, and therefore an unadulterated treasury of his most intimate mental experiences. In later years he presented this little work to Mr. Gutch, one of his Bristol friends, from whose effects, after his death, it was bought by the British Museum for ten guineas. "Strike me blind by lightning flashes of wit," a sentence written on one of the first pages, would be the rightful motto for this most interesting document, which, with the exception of fragments of poems, has neither been published nor used in any way. On the first page are these disjointed sentences : "Little Daisy." "Very late spring—March." "Haud si vivat?" "Do all things in faith. Never pluck a flower again. Mem." This at least is from the heart. Never would Coleridge have distinguished himself as a poet had he not looked on all he wrote with utmost earnestness.

Occupied with such waking dreams, he had, after about a month's residence in London, well-nigh forgotten his plans of emigration, his friends and his betrothed. In consideration of failing journey-money, Southey had meanwhile proposed to play the part of colonists in a

remote farm in Wales, a proposition which Coleridge angrily negatived. For whence were they to get the means of paying rent, and how were the principles of a new and ideal community to be realized in the midst of an old and rotten state! His Bristol friends in vain waited for further letters. The compact was in danger of failing before it was even tried. Southey had to come to London at the end of January 1795, to look up his friend. He represented to him that he had gone too far to leave Miss Fricker in the lurch; and persuaded him, to Lamb's great lamentation, to return to Bristol. In this city the English muse took up her quarters for the next twenty months. In the classic era she had been strictly confined to the metropolis, whence she addressed her strains principally to the scholars, the learned, and the fashion of the day; but in the present, romantic era she rambled with preference into the provinces, where she refreshed and renovated herself among more primitive men and circumstances.

The material hindrances to the scheme in question now became more obvious. The two friends lodged together in one room, wrote at one table; but, for all that, Cottle had to advance the rent. The lodging they chose, partly for its cheapness and partly because of its ready access to the open air, was in College Street, at the south-west end of the city; partly also because it was close to the great Free Library in King Street, which supplied them with books and papers. The proposed emigration was now deferred, though far from being

given up. Instead of departing for their destination, their daily bread had to be earned. The moment of disenchantment now approached. Southey was at all events the man to work. He wrote verses and newspaper articles. He published, in conjunction with Lovell, a volume of poems; these consisted of elegies and odes after the manner of Gray, of sonnets after that of Bowles, with a letter from "Fair Rosamond to King Henry after she had taken the veil," which even in its title recalls Pope's "Letter to Eloisa;" the whole headed by a motto from Bowles. He proposed also to found a periodical of their own,—*"The Provincial Magazine,"*—which should represent all the poetry of their circle. For some unknown reason, this came to nothing. Coleridge wrote much less; interrupted his industrious companion with his incessant talk; thought, also, more deeply; was not so easily satisfied with his own productions; and continued to polish up his *"Religious Musings"* so long, that he at last pronounced that "Poetry, like school-boys, by too frequent and severe correction may be cowed into dulness" (note-book, p. 4). According to his own statement (letter, 19th July, 1787), Southey earned four times as much as his, in some respects, more conscientious friend, who even now, healthy and unencumbered, was unable to maintain himself.

In such a position the fresh and devoted nature of his Sara was doubly refreshing to Coleridge. "Of how many pleasures," he says to himself in his undisturbed optimism, "of what lasting happiness is Pain the father, and Woe

the womb!" (note-book, p. 2). Passive as his passion for the young lady had become during the latter weeks of his London time, now, returned to her side it burst forth again into full flame. It was the rekindling of this feeling which consoled him under the delay of his Pantisocracy, and reconciled him in some measure to the despised reality of life. "That which we must do, we had better do willingly; it is a noble chemistry which turns necessity into a pleasure" (note-book, p. 3, outside).

The result of all this was at once a gentler estimate of political affairs. He had now to endeavour to adjust himself to things as they were. The period of this moral revolution is distinctly traceable on comparing the opinions he held the year before, with the lectures he now delivered in the Corn-hall at Bristol. He compared with prophetic eye the actual position of parties; while Southey, collecting and extracting as he went, was reading at about the same time in a more scholar-like way, the chief incidents in the history of the world, down to that of the war with America. Coleridge's sketch for the first lecture—on the French Revolution and on the English partizans of progress—was soon after published, "with all its inaccuracies and inelegant colloquialisms," in order to obviate any calumnious misrepresentations. Later on, in November 1795, he again published the lecture in a corrected and enlarged form, adding the two others, "*Conciones ad Populum*," in which Pitt's love of war, and that minister's desire

to put down freedom of opinion were discussed, and "The Plot Discovered." These two treatises, the first prose attempts published by him, give a tolerably complete and substantially moderated picture of the social ideas he then entertained.

Accordingly, at this time he speaks of the French Revolution rather as a warning than an example. Even the Girondists, from whose point of view he had, but a few months before, composed his "Fall of Robespierre," are now characterised as "strengthless dreamers." As to the English democrats, even the milder and less active are just as dangerous, in his sight, as the fiercest. He no longer takes his stand on the principles of the Republic, but on that of the Constitution. Instead of a blind imitation of the French nation, he now preached respect for the English constitution, at least in its fundamental principles; "if we had but a government who could carry them out" (First Lecture).

But Pitt, according to him, the ambitious utilitarian, misused alike all laws, good and bad, in order to continue the infamous war he had begun. Behind his "mystery-concealing meanness" Coleridge saw nothing but personal vulgarity. "How can one wonder at the outbreak of the Revolution," he says, "when one recalls the previous tyranny of the monarchs, as described, for example, in Schiller's 'Kabale und Liebe'?" What does Pitt do, even now, to prevent the Revolution, the advent of which on these coasts he so dreads? He, and no

other, is answerable for the excesses of the Paris, demagogues" (Second Lecture).

Also in his heart, he says, Pitt had no other thought than to enslave the Press and the Lecture Hall. He placed the theatres under police regulations, and forbade the representation of Schiller's "Robbers." He (Pitt) is even known to have uttered the following sentence: "The mass of the people have nothing to do with the laws but to obey them." This, according to Coleridge, was more than heathenish darkness; it was blasphemy against the God of the Christians" (Third Lecture). The fundamental idea is still that of being tired of Europe, but it is easy to read between the lines: "Fellow-citizens, overthrow Pitt, and I shall perhaps tolerate your mode of government."

A certain success—as usual with such addresses—was assured by the preconceived opinions of the public. As to the papers, the *Liberal New Monthly* praised the Lectures as "lively," while the Conservative *British Critic* condemned them as "the insolent irritability of youth." (He was but twenty-three, we may remember.) His audience was almost exclusively of the same party as himself, and lavished their approbation the more eagerly from the fact that great discontent prevailed in the city. The far-seeing policy of Pitt, especially devoted to the acquisition of distant colonies, was not understood. In the continental war Fortune favoured the French—the English army proved to be too small, and not skilfully led; and money was levied the more



unsparingly. The English Government had to supply more troops, and levy more taxes; trade was obstructed, the harvest proved unfavourable, and want became great. Upon this misery a lurid ray of light is thrown by an entry in the note-book (April, p. 5): "People starved into war. Over an enlisting-place in Bristol a quarter of lamb and a piece of beef hung up. The soul-enlivening airs of martial music played, to induce forgetfulness to toil; while the fraternity of mankind were employed in agricultural tasks." Under such circumstances the most empty speech, if but on the side of the opposition, was sure to be clapped.

Coleridge now developed a fresh and powerful style. Like Milton, a champion for freedom of combination, of opinion and press, he spoke out undismayed the whole truth, expressed himself concisely, and yet with rich imagery; and was sure to hit the mark, whether in cutting irony or powerful maxims. Like Jeremy Taylor, also, the royally and episcopally minded opponent of Milton, he allowed himself occasionally a pleasant digression. These two great men of the seventeenth century, were evidently his models, and he paid them many a tribute of admiration. He sought to combine the solid convictions of the one with the more moving fancy of the other, without adopting the long and ceremonious sentences of their time. He thus parted company from the cautious smoothness and circumspect tameness of most of the prose writers of the eighteenth century; approaching nearer to the 'Hercules furiens'

among contemporary orators, namely, Burke. That statesman, in his "Letters to a Noble Lord," had just turned upon his accusers, and mauled them worse than ever. Coleridge had no substantial sympathy with what he calls Burke's "declamatory invectives," and the less so, as they contained many an attack upon his honoured Priestley; at the same time, he placed them far higher than Pitt's "cunning harangues." "What repugnant feelings," he wrote in his note-book (p. 3), "did not Burke's book excite in me! I shuddered while I praised it—a web wrought with admirable beauty from a black bag of poison!" He little thought, as yet, that as far as change of opinion went, he was destined to walk in Burke's footsteps. In questions of form he was from the beginning on Burke's side. He shared with him the warmer style of syntax, the bolder similes, freer illustrations, and more poetic turns of speech—in short, the school of romantic prose—only that he looked back more directly to the seventeenth century. A few years more, and the innovation became the rule. Mackintosh, the Scotch lawyer, and the political opponent of Burke in the last decennium of the eighteenth century, pronounced Coleridge to be false in taste for maintaining the right style of oratory to be founded, not on Johnson, Gibbon, or Junius, but on Milton and Jeremy Taylor; not on French, but on national modes of delivery; and yet he came at last gradually to imitate "Jeremy Taylor's semicolons" ('Coleridge's Literary Remains').

These lectures made Coleridge celebrated in Bristol.

They procured him a number of worthy acquaintances, among whom Thomas Poole, a homely tanner by trade, stood foremost. This individual lived at the village of Nether Stowey, a day's journey to the south-west of the city. He was a man of robust figure, with hard toil-worn hands, well-to-do and far-travelled, possessor of a considerable library, and with a tender heart under his coarse tanner's leather apron. Coleridge visited him, and gained in him a noble patron for life. Josiah Wade, a sensible linen-draper in busy Wine Street, near the Exchange, was another friend; and also Benjamin Hobhouse, a lawyer, with a lively taste for art and poetry, a Unitarian, and author of 'A Journey in France and Italy' (published 1796). Both Wade and Hobhouse showed their appreciation of Coleridge in solid coin. Still more intimate with him was Dr. Thomas Beddoes the chemist—a pupil of Priestley's—who continued the pneumatic researches of his master, wrote upon the medicinal powers of certain gases, and just at this time founded a large sanitary establishment. He was a dry man, of few words, but an enthusiast and a philanthropist; with a superabundance of imagination, of many-sided interests and inexhaustible good impulses. He was such an admirer of the French Revolution, that he had thrown up his professorship at Oxford and moved to Bristol in 1792. Well-read in English, French and German poets, especially in Shakespeare and Schiller, he had himself composed an heroic poem upon Alexander the Great (also in 1792), in order by means

of an historical example, after the fashion of Southey's Joan of Arc, to stigmatise the thirst for conquest which the English were then showing in India. A year later he brought out a moral tale, called 'Isaac Jenkins,' in which, for the edification of the Bristol people, he narrated the conversion of a drunken workman, and had the pleasure of seeing his benevolent work run through several editions. Just at this time he was busily occupied in ventilating his hatred for Pitt in various pamphlets: "A word in defence of the Bill of Rights against gagging bills" (1795); "Where would be the harm of a speedy Peace!" (1795); "Essay on the public merits of Mr. Pitt" (1796). Like Coleridge, he defined the powerful minister as an ambitious egotist; as an unconscientious politician; as the ruiner of Parliaments; as instigating, and at the same time oppressing the people. At the side of such a man Coleridge felt himself at home, while the amiability of Mrs. Beddoes completed the attraction. On the death of the doctor, in 1810, he was more overpowered with grief, though they had not met for long, than he had been at any previous loss. All these radical friends were glad to have found so stout a champion of their cause, and encouraged him to continue the combat.

Coleridge, accordingly, in the next few months held two courses with six lectures each. In one of them he compared the English rebellion under Charles I. with the French Revolution, Milton with Mirabeau, Cromwell with Robespierre, Mazarin with Pitt. In another,

following the example of Priestley, he compared the original condition of Christianity with its present decline. He gave also single addresses, from time to time—in the Assembly House, on the quay,—on the slave-trade; on the tax on hair-powder; and on the tax on corn. Pure politics, however, gave him no continuous satisfaction—sermons were more his line. His many-sided nature drove him always from the political to the ecclesiastical arena. Meanwhile, rude reality, the delay in his proposed departure, and the contact with the prose of life, grated more and more upon his platonic latitudinarianism. He describes his state of mind as follows:—"Like a prisoner, who in his dreams has enjoyed the freedom he has imagined, he begins to suspect that he is sleeping, and fears to dispel the illusion by waking"\* (note-book, p. 5). Personal influences now contributed their aid: his betrothed was a quiet Christian; Lamb exhorted him by letter to practise a more humble piety; and the pastors of the Unitarian flock in Bristol drew him into their circle. The Rev. Mr. Hort delighted him with his flute-playing, and received in return a thank-offering in verse, assuring him that the tones of his music would accompany him even to the banks of the Susquehanna. The Rev. John Estlin, a wealthy individual of manly character, admitted him to his hospitable house; he was a lover of science,

\* "Non aliter quam captivus, qui forte imaginaria libertate fructatur in somnis; quam postea suspicari incipit se dormire, timet excitari blandis illusionibus."

well acquainted with Milton, Hartley, and Priestley, also a follower of Locke, but at the same time opposed to that class of superficial minds "which are not capable of grasping a whole." He believed in the Divine commission of Christ, in the inspiration of the Bible, in the trustworthy evidence of the miracles; but insisted far more on a righteous life than upon any dogma, and on the necessity of turning so-called Christians into real ones. These views were now incorporated into Coleridge's lectures. He wound up his theological course with a description of the glorious conditions of earthly life, if men were only Christians in the real sense of the word. In the second edition of these maiden addresses he introduced characteristic changes in this respect; protesting more strongly against the godless terrorism of the French; distinguishing more closely between democrats and unbelievers; and, turning suddenly against his celebrated Godwin, and his plan of bettering the world by secret societies, he pointed out the Holy Scriptures as the only source of improvement. Having before preached the virtues of moderation, perseverance, and the undisguised assertion of opinions, he now dwelt on the power of religion, virtue and self-denial. Having hitherto been a philosophical politician, he now became a theological one; and in the same summer—1795—it followed as a natural result that he essayed his powers in the pulpit itself.

It is true, on the other hand, that he showed in his

first sermon how disposed he was to secularise the Church, and to mix up religion with politics. Mr. Estlin evidently feared as much, for he allowed him to make his *début* in Bath, and not in the Unitarian chapel at Bristol. Hardly had he entered the vestry than he refused resolutely to put on the black gown—not a scrap of that “Babylonian woman,” as he called the Established Church, should appear on his person; and, to the horror of the minister, he entered the pulpit in his blue coat and bright buttons, with a white waistcoat. The controversial tone in which he intended to speak betrayed itself immediately in his text: “When they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward” (Isaiah viii. 21). What followed was little more than a repetition of a lecture he had given shortly before upon the corn laws. This was too much even for his friends. On his next appearance in the pulpit the congregation consisted only of seventeen persons; and as this time he fell back upon another former lecture—that on the tax on hair-powder—his hearers one by one stole out of the church. On later occasions he learned to conform better to the established forms; it was only strange that he should ever have attempted to take part in public worship.

The poems of the spring and summer of 1795 relate either to the war or to his betrothed. The first were written in pantisocratical conjunction with Southey; the second, as natural, by himself alone. The first were

all epic in character, the second lyric. Both show the aim at truer conceptions of life.

One entry in his note-book (p. 6) is as follows :—"The Devil is dressed in everlasting black; ergo, no sansculotte." This leads to the conclusion that it was in that summer that Coleridge composed "The Devil's Thoughts." This is a grim satire on the public mismanagement of affairs, in the form of a humorous ballad. The only poem he had hitherto written of this kind was "The Raven"; in both the hero of the part observes with malignant delight how the vices of the governing clique lead to their own destruction. This poem is also in doggerel, the narrative enlivened with questions, and retaining verbatim the epic refrain "over hill and over dale." The difference is, that the Raven soon comes to an end, while here the black fiend is more circumstantially described; he, like a gentleman, is dressed

"in his Sunday best.

His jacket was red and his trousers were blue,  
And there was a hole where his tail came through,"

and this tail he switches backwards and forwards "as a gentleman switches his cane." The satire which in his earlier time was dealt out indiscriminately to all is now confined to certain classes and conditions. The Devil makes merry over the tricks of lawyers and rich men; over orthodoxy and government, apothecaries and scholars; till, perceiving a certain general's burning face—obviously in allusion to the war—he takes fright and runs away, "for he thought 'twas a general conflagration."



From what predecessor did he derive this matter-of-fact tone? All appearances point to Burns, whom Lamb was always recommending him to study as a wholesome counterpoise.

The lampoon ballads of the rantin' "bardie" doubtless suggested to him the idea of "The Devil's Thoughts," and their resolute, drastic downrightness supplied the style. In the following year, also, immediately after the death of Burns, Coleridge celebrated his memory as that of "Nature's own beloved bard." It must be remembered, also, that the three introductory stanzas and a few of those that follow, belong to Southey, who composed the best parts, and perhaps even gave the idea of the whole. But, at all events, Coleridge is entitled to part of the merit, and equally is it certain that it was not the ancient ballads which Percy had dug up from the past, but the living productions of the Bristol set, which Burns essentially contributed to fructify, and which drew Coleridge down from his clouds and converted him to the ruder, healthier, but long-despised northern feeling. This approximation to a more popular style and mode of thought found its reward. "The Thoughts of the Devil" was the first poem proceeding from the Pantisocratical camp which obtained the notice of the public; and it so rapidly circulated in MS., that in 1798, in spite meanwhile of a change of opinions, Coleridge was obliged to permit its publication, and by 1850, 15,000 copies were sold. Shelley had also imitated it in his "Devil's Walk," and Lyon in "The Devil's Drive."

It was at this time that Coleridge took part in that new modelling of "Joan of Arc," which Southey found necessary as soon as he began to print it. At twenty years of age our young student had purposed writing an epic poem on the fall of Jerusalem, but had wandered off into the "Religious Musings," which in many respects recalled the "Paradise Lost." The more interest did he take in this first important attempt to renew the art of the epic romance. In the introduction he set himself to polish many a rough blank verse, as is evident from the still preserved MS. in the British Museum. For the second book he undertook—Southey watching carefully at his elbow—to contribute a considerable portion of the dream of the Maid of Orleans, at first incorporated in the original edition, but later published separately, under the title of "The Destiny of Nations." This fragment is more closely related to the "Religious Musings" than to any other poem by Coleridge; indeed, may be said to have grown out of it; though on nearer examination exhibiting no small difference; and in the meanwhile, the description, both of the natural and supernatural, may be compared—to use a painter's expression—to the realism of the Netherlandish school.

The introduction in both poems is a Song of praise to the Platonic God; to the infinite Love which informs "myriads of self-conscious minds," "atoms numberless," and monads. And then, not content with generalities, he enlists more individual forms, summons the mystic monsters of Greenland, "with pitying spirits who make

their moan o'er slaughtered infants," "or that giant bird Vuokho, the beat of whose wings is Tempest;" and that nameless monster who dwells as destructive principle in the depths of the ocean. Wild phantasies, yet wise; adding, as if in his own excuse,

"Till Superstition, with unconscious hand,  
Seat Reason on her Throne."

This is the preamble. With a sudden turn, "and such perhaps the spirit who held commune with that warrior-maid of France who scourged the invader," he leaps to a winter scene in a rude village, describing it with a reality of which his earlier poems afford no parallel. He thus exchanges the aristocratic guidance of Spenser and Milton for the humbler one of Cowper. For the maid as here depicted is the exact counterpart of Cowper's honest peasant girl, in the *Winter Evening*, in the "Task"—"artless and dignified, like the fair shepherdess of old romance." One winter's evening she finds in the wilderness of snow a countryman with horses and cart, which he describes with almost the nicety of Cowper in the "Task," with the same poor mother with her children "crowded beneath the coverture," "lifeless all, yet lovely." Originally, with an anticipation of Wordsworth's manner, he gave the number of the children, viz., six—"but why not nine?" as Lamb, in one of his letters, banteringly asks him. His democratic tendency is more evident here than in his former years. The poor countryman—husband and father—has been driven from his village by the invading English, his cottage burnt, and

his wife and children frozen to death! Such are the effects of war! And, in his search for suitable detail, he describes the cold suckling on the mother's arm, "the crisp milk frozen on its innocent lips."

And now follows the vision of Joan, "stung with too keen a sympathy," as explained by her guardian spirit. She sees the chaos that preceded Time. The difficulty for the poet was to present that which was formless under any intelligible shape. He compares it "with slimy shapes, and miscreated life," poisoning with long and pestful calm "the vast Pacific," till at length "the fresh breeze wakens the merchant sail uprising." This was a description not imagined, but borrowed from some equatorial voyager, and repeated later in the "Ancient Mariner." Milton had helped himself out with the ever substantial forms of waves, flames, and volcanoes; and Coleridge himself, in the "Religious Musings," with the abstract expression, "an anarchy of spirits." Here he has found for the Inexpressible a positive image, conjuring up an appearance of reality, without diminishing the sense of mysterious vagueness. We are intended to feel ourselves arm-in-arm with the Supernatural, and to shudder at it.

From chaos now emerges a "hell-hag, foul bringer of tyranny and war." In the "Religious Musings" she is seated, in Miltonian fashion, in an underground cave, "unconquerable, huge; Creation's eyeless drudge" . . . "nursing the impatient earthquake." Now the allegory turns into a vision. The period of the Rococo had

forgotten how to produce apparitions under the garb of reality. The writers of that time brought them on the stage suddenly and pompously, wrapped in grave-clothes—as, for instance, in “Admiral Hosier’s Ghost”—losing thereby those finer details of preparation and surroundings intended gradually to excite the credulous elements of the imagination. In this way the Supernatural was no more than an operatic impression. The witches of Macbeth danced a regular ballet on the London stage. Even the old popular ballads were dressed up after a modern fashion. Thus it was that “Margaret’s Ghost,” recast by Mallet (1759), no longer appeared in the witching hour of midnight, but in the solemn hour of dawn. Unannounced it glides in, with the first stanza, and grinds out its horrors in sprawling rhetoric: “The hungry worm my sister is.” This was a defect common to the Rococo school even on the Continent, and first sharply denounced by Lessing in his critique on Voltaire’s ‘Semiramis,’ where the ghost bursts full drive by open daylight into the assembly of the nation. The classicists were altogether too much occupied with the effect of single verses or expressions not to neglect the finer transitions and organic coherence of the whole. They wrote in epigrams. Only in the popular ballads was the old magic power of ghostly elements preserved; especially in Scotland, where the feeling of the Middle Ages, properly speaking, extended down to Walter Scott. Lying, as it were, dusty and despised in a corner of the literary lumber-room, till a year after the outbreak of

the Revolution, Burns pulled it out in his well-known poem of "Tam o' Shanter," which no longer smells of the dust of the theatre, but of the true brimstone of the infernal regions. Not that Burns can be said to have known the treasure he had discovered. He conceived the grim situation only as a joke. The ghosts are in Tam's own head. The Piper, instead of being the Devil, is the wind. Coleridge was in earnest. He learned from the Scotch the difficult art of properly introducing a witch. A new and fertile field of romance was thus laid open, and Coleridge forthwith began to cultivate it. His note-book (at p. 4) records the old British legend of the fifty king's daughters who were driven by a storm to England, and there in intercourse with devils peopled the island with giants.

The fact that between the magic scenes as conceived by Coleridge, and those in "Tam o' Shanter," certain differences existed, is not to be denied. But this proves nothing against the influence of Burns. They point rather to a second teacher, and that a German one, in what may be called "the black art" of poetry. But when the English writers of the Rococo period adopted a foreign poet other than the antique, it was sure to be a Frenchman or an Italian: and the Romantic school took the lead. How heartily does Goldsmith ridicule the unwieldy erudition of the Germans! "If angels were to write, they would write no folios." Up to the appearance of the "Sorrows of Werther," German had only been learnt for commercial and business

purposes—as some people learn Russian nowadays. The respect for nationality and for the Middle Ages, the sense of an affinity with other countries, the feeling for German ideas, came first with the Romantic school. “Gessner’s Idyls,” though still partaking strongly of the pseudo-classic, were the first offspring of the German Muse, which, under the royal House of Hanover, found a welcome in England. That was from 1760 to 1769. Between 1770-79, Werther made its appearance, when the passionate yearning for the larger school of Nature took the place of the pious landscape idyl. The third step was taken by Schiller in his early dramas, which, after the outbreak of the French Revolution, were called for and translated. “The Robbers” especially attracted the friends of freedom by its dissatisfaction with the conventionalities of society and by its impetuous longing for natural rights, even when iron and fire and previous injustice were necessary to attain them. Among the more considerable poets who went with this stream our pantisocrats were the first. Werther influenced Southey, who swallowed him in his school-days and turned a sonnet to “the neglected Albert”; while Coleridge contemptuously assigned him to the ranks of the whining fashionable romancers (*Watchman*, No. IV.). It was different with Schiller. He pleased Southey, who described the last act of “Kabale and Liebe” as “dreadfully affecting,” and undertook to write a whole series of Robber tragedies; while as to our young Titan, Schiller threw him into ecstasy. In the beginning

of 1795\* a college friend, with whom Coleridge had supped, gave him a drama to read, "the very name of which I had never before heard. A winter's midnight, the wind high, and the Robbers for the first time! The readers of Schiller will conceive what I felt." This is the introduction to an enthusiastic sonnet on Schiller, "the bard, tremendous in sublimity,"—evidently the fruit of his first fresh impression. It is easy to see which part of the tragedy attracted him the most; namely, the voice of the starving father, proceeding from the dark dungeon in the weather-beaten tower. The kindred night-scenes of Burns and Schiller were fused together in Coleridge's imagination. Schiller stood the highest in his opinion, "for human beings agitate and astonish more than all the goblin rout, even of Shakespeare" (Introduction to the Sonnet). He also jotted down fragments of opinion in the note-book among hints for exciting stories. It may truly be said that Schiller impelled him to pursue the doings of demons more from within than from without, thus leading the way to a more impressive and penetrating realism.

The remainder of these jottings is less interesting. Now, become riper, and at all events sometimes compelled to resign his own will, he sought more sympathy with the

\* It was in December 1794, or January 1795, that Coleridge published this sonnet with others in the *Morning Chronicle*. This is evident from the date of the lectures (February 1795), in which both "The Robbers" and "Cabal and Love" are mentioned.



Actual, more embodiment of the Spiritual. The change is seen even in style and metre. The breaks in his blank verse are placed more in the centre of the line, permitting thus, as he expressed himself to his friend Poole (6th May, 1796), "of greater richness." The style of the "Religious Musings" became "more sublime, but has no longer that diffused air of severe dignity which characterises my epic slice." From these judgments, passed on himself, it is evident how rightly he took cognisance of what went on in his own mind—like modern poets, generally speaking, who feel their own pulse.

In the spring and summer of 1795 he cultivated anew the school of landscape lyrics with erotic colouring, and the more abundantly from the fact that Cottle offered him thirty pounds for the little volume. The former models are still traceable. The manner of Bowles, though quite in a general way, is seen in the musical Sonnet to the river Otter. Coleridge was quick in grasping an idea, though slow in working it out. It seems even as if his chief influence over Southey consisted in grafting some of Bowles' elegiac enamel upon that poet's fresh but feeble boyishness. Southey writes, with significant connection, "my poetic taste has been much ameliorated by Bowles, and the constant intercourse with Coleridge."

And now the transference from the American castle in the air to Bristol brought with it a more concrete style. Wherever he went, the passion for his betrothed accompanied him. It kept his heart warm, and his eyes open to the beauties of the surrounding landscape. It

was bliss for "the poor bard in city garret pent," not only to utter the name of Philomel, but to hear her sing. The sweet beat of her tones wakened a thousand ideas in his seething brain; but sweeter still sounded the voice of his Sara. With a heart fuller than ever of life and love, he looked around him in his walks. His powers of observation were further stimulated by reading Thomson's "Seasons." An entry in the note-book (p. 4) begins: "The vernal hours"—"*lege* Thomson,"—and soon follows the date "April day—the sunshine blends with every shower; and look! how full and lovely it lies on yonder hills!" In May, ascending Brockley Coomb, Somersetshire, he was fairly overpowered by the beauty of the distance. In the Sonnet so entitled he gives for the first time a picture with local colour and characteristic features proper to that place only; and again he ends with the all-explaining refrain, "O were my Sara but here!" The deeper his own emotions, the richer and truer was the echo from Nature herself.

At length, on the 4th October, 1795, the event he had so ardently desired, came to pass. The young poet, only twenty-three years of age, was married to his lady-love at the beautiful church of St. Mary Redcliffe; the fine architecture of which inspired the fancy of Chatterton, and witnessed also the consecration of Southey's love. Coleridge, however, was not likely to think of the beauty of a building which, to his view, represented only the superstition, extortion, and compulsory service by which it had been erected, and was therefore purchased far too

dearly. He was, we know, a Pantisocratist, and that not only by public profession. When a friend asked him in confidence—his wife trusting unquestioning to his genius—how he proposed to meet his new responsibilities, he pointed straightway to the generosity of his publisher Cottle, who had promised him an honorarium of one-and-a-half guineas for every hundred verses, and had also given him an instalment in advance. What we now call Communism had taken such root in the whole circle, that even this wealthy publisher saw nothing alarming in the declaration given in the preface to the poem called "The Malvern Hills," that "no sentiment has been more detrimental to mankind than the belief that the property we have is our own, and that it is to be hoped that the period is not far removed when every poor man will receive a stipend from the Government under which he lives, rising in proportion to the number of his children" (Preface to his poem, "The Malvern Hills"). Freely as Coleridge took, he liked also to give; he agreed, for instance, to give his mother-in-law an allowance of five guineas a quarter; though he certainly was not often in a position to pay it. Unencumbered with worldly possessions, and light of heart, the new-married couple repaired on their wedding-day to the little sea-side town of Clevedon, about half a day's journey from Bristol; and there, for two months, enjoyed such happiness as the young bridegroom had only expected on the shores of the Susquehanna. The dream was realised, and all sense

of disappointment gave way before the feeling of an Elysian bliss.

The life at Clevedon was pure poetry in a Pantisocratic sense. The solitary cottage they inhabited was at the west end of the little town, and was almost as primitive as if it had been meant for our first parents. It consisted only of the ground floor, on a level with the garden, with a rose-tree peeping in at the window. The room they occupied had been simply whitewashed, and that a long time before. Their friend Cottle, who rode out to see them on the fourth day, had the consideration to order a carpet for them. All other arrangements were eminently fitted for a philosopher. The wash-table had no glass, and the kitchen no kettle. The young wife had to dispense with coffee, rice, spice, and a number of other trifles, and among them, not the least, a Bible. But the rent was only five pounds a year, and the young husband nourished the happy conviction of earning all they wanted within a week. Thinking, rhyming, and perhaps some household work, filled up the flying hours. In the well-known note-book (p. 6) he writes: "Men, eager to adulterise my time by absenting me from my wife." And the wife not only shared his society, but also all the delights of his fancy. He discoursed to her on Spenser's giants, and on Ossian's heroes; on the wonderful connection between the spiritual and physical world, and on the All-Incomprehensible; until the "meek daughter of the family of Christ" reproved his freethinking bubble-blowing, and bade him

“walk humbly with his God.” He even tried to rouse her literary ambition ; put some lines of acknowledgment to Cottle, for a silver thimble he had given her, into her mouth, and had them printed in her name. Out of doors, the white-flowering jasmine and the broad-leaved myrtle grew as high as the roof ; undulating meadows and woods stretched out far into the distance ; the lark sang high in the heavens, “viewless, or haply for a moment seen, gleaming on sunny wings ;” and over the silent, fragrant downs the thunder of the waves murmured low. How different to noisy, sooty, angular Bristol ! And as he mounted a neighbouring hill for the first time, and overlooked the surrounding country—with the Severn winding bright and full ; with the green fields, the white villages, and the flitting shadows of the clouds ; with the vanishing sails and distant islands—he folded his hands and felt the whole earth to be one temple. Doubly unenvying, yea, even with a kind of compassion, did he now contemplate the gold-seeking Bristol citizens as they walked past on a Sunday, eyeing his little abode with signs of envy. Absorbed in wandering thoughts would he sit at noonday on the slope of the hill, viewing through “half-closed eyelids the sunbeams dance like diamonds on the main.” Still sweeter was it to sit in the twilight, arm-in-arm with his wife, while the evening star twinkled cheerfully over a darkening world, and when “it was a luxury to be.” And further, to add the charm of Nature’s music to the ear, he hung up an Eolian harp, on which every breath of air softly played.

Reality had now risen to the level of romance; the unattainable had become true.

On the other hand, poetry had become the mirror of reality. This is seen in his poems, "The Eolian Harp," and "Reflections upon an Asylum of Peace"; the first written in Clevedon, the other shortly after their departure. These are the truest and deepest-felt pictures of feeling hitherto found in Coleridge's writings. Even in outward form, in style and metre, these verses show a homely freedom. The inflated tropes which greatly disfigure his youthful effusions are now replaced by affecting repetitions :

" Our cot, our cot, o'ergrown  
With white-flowered jasmin ;"

at other times by synonymous expressions :

" The stilly murmur of the distant sea  
Tells us of silence."

More significant still is the difference in the modes of description. His apprenticeship to the school of Milton is, it is true, still unmistakeable. The "Eolian Harp" serves as a cheerful pendant to the sorrowful "Farewell Reflections," as the "Allegro" does to the "Penseroso." The different situations are arranged according to the divisions of the day:—like Milton, Coleridge's lark sings in the morning, the waters murmur in noonday, while musical sounds—there, of clanging bells, here, of vibrating strings—are heard in the evening. The green radiance also of Wordsworth's glowworm appears again in the diamond gleam of the river's ripples; while the

half-seen, half-vanished snowflakes of Burns reappear in the lark, now viewless, now seen gleaming on golden wings. But all these features—indoors and out—all these actions in human and animal life are now, as matters of his own experience, closely observed, drawn from Nature herself, and organically worked out. We have no longer further to do with literary borrowings, but with original perceptions; only occasionally directed by the ancient models. At the same time, another mind was now at his side, unbiased in view and feeling, and while he gazed fondly upon it, its directness and its honesty infected even him. The description of the Transcendental is now as clearly rendered as that of the Matter-of-fact. We no longer deal with isolated phenomena, but feel that divine omnipotence of life which beats in everlasting love and harmony behind the dial-plate of all earthly things:

“And what, if all of animated nature  
Be but organic harps diversely framed,  
That tremble into thought; as o’er them sweeps,  
Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,  
At once the soul of each, and God of all!”

Milton had already struggled to represent the idea of the great Soul of the universe. His “Penseroso” travails with a Being, above, below, and around us,—with the “unseen Genius of the Wood”—though leading his puritan imagination direct to church music and divine worship. Pope, Thomson, Cowper, and the youthful Wordsworth, all prominent landscape-poets of the

eighteenth century, had striven with the same problem, and only approximately succeeded in describing what they felt, under the image of the revealed Creator. Coleridge comprehended and expressed it at once. His mind had long been prepared for it by the knowledge of Plotinus and Pantheism. In Clevedon, under the spell of the full enjoyment of love and nature, the existence of the Divine Soul of the Universe seemed to be revealed to him with a clearness never realised before, and with it also the power to express it. This was his profound legacy to his successors in landscape poetry. Both Wordsworth and Shelley betray his influence when they strike prophetic tones. They also apostrophise birds, heard, but not seen ; Ariel-like Shelley, the lark ; homely Wordsworth, the cuckoo,—pointing by such mysterious music to the all-pervading Unity. Wordsworth at the commencement of his great poem speaks of Nature's Eolian harp, which on beautiful evenings seems to search the very soul ; and Shelley, more strikingly still, recalling Coleridge's melodious simile, carries affection forward into the great Beyond :

“ Music, when soft voices die,  
Vibrates on the memory ;  
So thy thought, when thou art gone,  
Love itself shall slumber on.”

We stand now at an important point of our poet's development. His lyrical feeling has worked itself out symmetrically. He knew well why he called “The Eolian Harp” “the most perfect poem I ever wrote.”



In this sphere he needed to learn nothing further from the art of another. His former models were now laid by like cast-off crutches in a corner ; and not only Gray and Bowles, but also Milton and Spenser. He has learned to stand on his own feet, and from a submissive but never slavish scholar, a master has been formed, who, in his turn, attracts great scholars.

Though Coleridge had for a time curbed the restlessness of his being, he was destined to have no suspension of struggle. The quiet joys of Clevedon were soon interrupted, and the next twelve months only brought a succession of more vexatious disappointments, miseries, and needs than he had ever experienced. The rudest change from sunshine to frost was destined to bring his mind to rapid maturity.

The first stab came from his best friend, and not unexpectedly. Southey's long and close association with him had preserved his respect for the poet, but not for the man. He took umbrage at the "inordinate love of talking," with which Coleridge passed hour after hour, without attempting to work for his wife and himself. It provoked him to hear him hold forth in always the same strain, whether on the platform, in the pulpit, or in society. He was irritated on one occasion when, having, by Coleridge's entreaty, ceded one of his lectures—on the decline and fall of the Roman Empire—to him, Coleridge so dreamed and talked away the time that the public, after waiting long, went away grumbling. Then ensued a quarrel between the two, which the

Frickers and Cottle had some trouble in patching up. This seriously shook the friendship. Southey found that he could not rely on him, and Coleridge, in his turn, shrugged his shoulders at the literary dexterity of his fellow-lodger; and as marriage now interrupted their daily intercourse, a serious breach took place.

About five weeks after Coleridge's establishment in Clevedon, Southey announced to him that the plan of a primeval farm on the shore of the Susquehanna was no longer to be thought of; but that, with the help of a rich uncle, he intended to undertake a journey to Lisbon, for the purpose of studies calculated to fit him, as soon as possible, to earn his bread as an author. He also had a betrothed; a few days later he was married to Miss Edith Fricker, and the couple left the altar straight for Portugal. Coleridge could not conceal from himself that with Southey's withdrawal, the American plan lost its chief support. We now hear of a quarto volume he proposed to write on the subject of Pantisocracy, but nothing more of outfit and journey. Those who were to have joined in the plan remained now at home, and came to grief more pitiably there perhaps than they would have done on the other side of the ocean. Lovell died the next year of a fever; Samuel LeGrice and Favell went as volunteers, and lost their lives in the Spanish campaign; Burnet lived longer, even till 1811, tried his fortune as an inferior penny-a-liner, as a surgeon, and as a Unitarian preacher, in all unsuccessfully; and finally lost himself in moral degradation.

Coleridge might have had a similar lot but for his genius and his powers of social attractiveness. He had no rich uncle to help him; he had also sacrificed more for the chimerical plan, and depended more on its fulfilment.

The faithless Southey was now in legal form his brother-in-law, but never again his friend—he might depart even without a shake of the hand. In happy Clevedon he could keep his annoyance to himself, but in the rough weather which awaited him it broke out all the more bitterly. He wrote thus to Cottle on the 22nd of February, 1796, in reference to Cambridge: "I had left my friends; I had left plenty; I had left that ease which would have secured me a literary immortality, and have enabled me to give to the public works conceived in moments of inspiration and polished with leisurely solitude; and alas, for what have I left them? For ——, who deserted me in the hour of distress, and for a scheme of virtue impracticable and romantic." The Sonnet in praise of Southey was now suppressed. Cottle and Charles Lamb had to invoke all the powers of memory and relationship in order, on Southey's return (May 1796), to bring about a reconciliation. Yet Coleridge thus complained in 1797: "Friends, like the upas-tree, most false and fair, have tempted me to slumber under their shade e'en mid the storm, and then mixed their own venom with the rain from heaven" (to George Coleridge). Gradually a tolerable understanding was brought about, but the old mutual enthusiasm never

returned. It had departed with the Pantisocratic scheme.

Thrown thus, as Coleridge perceived, after the departure of Southey, upon Europe for a home, and on his own literary earnings for his support, he could no longer endure the idle life on the Severn. He had begun to print an edition of his collective poems in the summer, and was now obliged to work earnestly at it. He wanted to start a large periodical at once, in order to further the cause of freedom, and that of his own maintenance. But printers and colleagues, newspapers and books, were far off in Bristol. The journey there and back took every time more than a day. In the capacity of editor also, which he undertook at first, he found that he wanted more intellectual stimulus than Sara and Clevedon could supply him. "Good temper and habitual ease," he says in his note-book, "are the first ingredients of private society; but wit, knowledge, or originality, must break their even surface into some inequality of feeling, or conversation is like a journey on an endless flat." He therefore took leave of the quiet cot, lightening the adieu by moral reflections: "Was it right, while my unnumbered brethren toiled and bled, that I should dream away the entrusted hours on roseleaf beds! pampering the coward heart with feelings all too delicate for use." Poetry alone would not in truth have sufficed to fill his life. "The limited sphere of mental activity in an artist," is the sentence jotted down in his note-book. With such inward consolation he returned to Bristol at the beginning

of December 1795. He believed it would only be for a short period, and therefore took up his abode at his mother-in-law's house, and left Sara at Clevedon. But as week after week went by without his return to her, the young wife rebelled against the loneliness, and followed him; and their residence in the city continued for nearly a year.

Coleridge as founder and editor of a newspaper! A very problematical position! It is, however, matter of praise that he plunged into the business with the greatest energy. His only fault was that he wanted to do too much. The organ was to be of an exhaustive character—at once newspaper, review and annual register; with leading articles, parliamentary reports; with historical and critical essays; but without advertisements—for such services towards the business world smacked too much of bribery. *The Watchman* was to appear weekly, with thirty-two closely printed pages, and warranted to tell the whole truth; for, according to the motto borrowed from Priestley, "Truth is power, and the truth shall make us free." Friends, although sceptical, were enrolled in the undertaking. Cottle—fourteen helpers in his one person—purchased the paper and undertook to be security to the printer; Burnet became sub-editor; and 370 Bristol names were entered as subscribers. The Dreamer seemed to be transformed. At the beginning of January 1796, and in those centres of industry in the west of England, which, as most in communication with the United States, had

immensely increased in wealth, and independence of opinion, he undertook what may be called a recruiting tour. In Birmingham he invaded one great merchant after another in his counting-house. The first on whom he stumbled was a haggard, abstemious tallow-chandler. Coleridge argued with him like a lawyer, drew pictures like a poet, prophesied the speedy coming of the millennium like an apostle; and, for all that, as he has described in the 'Biographia Literaria,' with exquisite self-ridicule, was growlingly shown the door; because he offered too many wares. After a few experiences of this kind he contented himself with presenting his letters of introduction, and if invited to remain, he limited the persuasions of his melodious tongue to twenty minutes. With Unitarians, Arians and Trinitarians he preached sedition, and sought to attract subscribers by posting placards. He thus ingratiated himself in all the more important towns, as far as Liverpool, with the radical leaders; to some of the most pronounced of whom he desired to dedicate Sonnets—as, for instance, to the Rev. Gilbert Wakefield, who shortly after was condemned to two years' imprisonment for a revolutionary pamphlet; to G. A. Pollen, Esq., M.P., who attacked with speech and pen the corruption of all forms of traditional government; to Dr. Samuel Parr, who kept a school near Birmingham, was intimate with Chas. Fox and Godwin, and who at a great party on his just past birthday (January 26, 1796), had proposed as a toast, a rope for the Prime Minister's

neck. The contact with such heroes of the tongue was calculated more and more to inflame the hot-headed young canvasser. His ardent disposition knew no restraint beyond that of an equally exaggerated conscientiousness. When once induced by the entreaty of an anxious minister to conceal his blue coat and bright buttons beneath what he felt to be the hypocritical black gown, he wrote to Bristol with touching self-reproach: "I plead guilty, my God! Indeed I want firmness." In Birmingham, at a meeting of kindred souls, who were disposed to take him by the hand, he began his address with the following discouraging announcement: "I am far from convinced that a Christian is permitted to read either newspapers, or any other works of a merely political and temporal interest." This singular form of persuasion came to a height in Derby, where he roundly reprimanded the poet and naturalist Dr. Darwin for his supposed atheism. At Sheffield he forbore to advertise his new project, because a local paper—*The Iris*—had already taken up the cause of freedom with sufficient hardihood. If, in spite of these peculiarities, he returned to Bristol with a list of 1,000 subscribers, it was owing to the sanguine views he propounded everywhere, and partly to the respect that Englishmen feel for a strongly pronounced individuality.

And the work itself! Even the first number, announced to appear on the 1st March, 1796, was behind its time. The second contained an article which mercilessly criticised the official order issued, for a day of

fasting and prayer, on account of the war; adding these words from Isaiah: "my bowels shall sound like a harp." The more pious half of his readers felt this to be strangely misplaced, and threw up their subscriptions. Then his more free-thinking readers took umbrage because in the next week he denounced the extreme left of the English Jacobins as immoral, and their chief representative Godwin as "an imp of sensuality." For the first class he was too lax, for the second too prejudiced. The very richness of his intellectual development, which forbade his ever conforming to one only sect, or party, was the perpetual cause of his failure in worldly matters. Opposite complaints arose as to the selection of his subjects. The debates in Parliament were given too lengthily for some, too briefly for others. Some accused him of incompleteness, and yet this part of the work cost him the most trouble. One reader thought the poems scattered in the paper too few, and another thought them too many. Instead of fresh orders for subscription came letters of complaint, and those often unfranked. Carlyle has imputed to him "indolent impatience of the claims and ignorances of others." This was in point of fact the general impression, but the cause was attributable rather to an ideal aim to be just to the claims of all. He failed, in short, by a simple want of common-sense, and had to pay for it by a crash. The tenth number (13th May) was the last. "The undertaking does not pay." The profits did not cover the expenses of the printing and paper, and but



for Cottle's generosity, the affair would have ended much worse. "O watchman, thou hast watched in vain!" During the next winter Coleridge remarked how much paper the maid stuffed into the stove in order to light the fire, and told her of it. "La! Sir, why it's only the *Watchman*."

Nor did his collective poems bring him more profit. Not that he can fairly be reproached with indolence in the usual acceptation of the term. Verses that in an access of inspiration he threw off in an hour, would often take him two or three days to polish. Sonnets that had appeared a year before, required to be altered, moderated, cleared up. Especially towards the poems of his boyhood was he severe in judgment, and many of the most interesting never appeared till the last edition, in 1834. Even "The Devil's Thoughts" struck him as too vulgar. When, therefore, the volume at last came out in April 1796, it was as good as he could make it, and was sold off in half a year. But it was small, and only brought in just enough to clear off his debts to Cottle. In his position as a married man, he doubtless hoped for more; for he felt the obligations of duty. But his Pegasus was too fine a creature to submit to the yoke; though, circumstanced as he was, he would, like Southey, have been the better husband had he been a worse poet. The practical results of both publications, poetical and prosaical, were thus somewhat sad; but both furthered his intellectual progress.

The editorship of the *Watchman* had obliged him

to better define his own political views, and to form more decided opinions as to what was going on in the world. Accordingly, the pages of the *Watchman* plainly show how the French excesses led him involuntarily in a more conservative direction. The first numbers preserved throughout the point of view upheld in the lectures given in the Corn-hall. "Pitt must have surrendered to a foreign clique,"—that of the emigrants. "The war means general ruin, and must in time root out the active class of society." Why should not the Government, in view of the insupportable taxes, and of the famine among the people, take measures to mix a little opium with the food supplies, in order to render them more nourishing? This was a sarcastic question which friend Beddoes, in his "Letter to Mr. Pitt," knowing how readily the populace in various parts had had recourse to this stupefying remedy, had suggested; and, though agreeing literally with the doctor, Coleridge answered, "Opium might import bad habits." Meanwhile the *Watchman* treated France, up to the middle of April, with decided, though cautious friendliness. At the same time he wrote in his note-book, with perfect seriousness, a number of furious entries about "poor John Bull under the custody of a State Argus."

But in the eighth number of the *Watchman*, of the 22nd April, another tone is heard. Napoleon had just commenced his Italian campaign, and in Paris the Directory had refused England's overtures of peace in order to keep possession of the Netherlands. The war

was no longer one of defence, but of attack. Coleridge was obliged to confess that the Republic was bent rather on conquering than emancipating other nations, and that it no longer deserved pity, nor even admiration, but reprobation. In an angry protest, the subscriberless *Watchman* on the Avon now adjured the ruthless powers on the Seine, in the name of humanity, not to renew the horrors of war; and in the laconic terms of one now undeceived, he announced the dread proclamations of the 15th and 17th April. The scales had now fallen from his eyes. It was no longer a question as to the moral welfare of Europe, but as to the dominion of the sea, and the safety of our Colonies. He now understood the eagerness of Pitt regarding the despised West Indian Islands. In the next number he recorded with complacency that Great Britain commanded the whole route to the East Indies, and almost the whole to the West. He felt that the increased demand for English goods, and the flourishing foreign trade, lightened the burden of the National Debt, and the misery of the lower classes. "We have," he says, "the nerves of war, and the splendours of peace." This entire adhesion to these opinions did not, it is true, last long. In Coleridge's mind everything had its time. Burke, who, almost like Mirabeau, had gone over to the Royal party, was compared to a cameleon, "with hues as changing as they are brilliant" (*Watchman*, 17th March), and many a harsh criticism did he deal out, in the next years, on the Government. Especially, he never forgave Pitt for

protecting the slave trade, for fettering the Press and for repressing sentiments of freedom with police regulations. He acknowledged the results with a passing show of approval, just as one praises a brave enemy. But from first to last he condemned his crooked diplomacy and outwardly violent means. "A state of compulsion, even though that compulsion be directed by perfect wisdom, keeps mankind stationary ; for whenever it is withdrawn, after a lapse of ages, they have to try evil, in order to know whether or no it be not good." What so deeply disappointed him in the French was the want of that feeling for moderation, and the patience necessary for all great aspirations. "Human happiness, like the aloe, a flower of slow growth" (note-book, May 1795).

The critical department of the *Watchman*, and the publication of his poems, led him also to a clearer understanding of his own poetical theories. Till then he had only intimated these theories in his poems or in private notes. Eagerly as, in his boyhood, he had studied both Plato and Plotinus, he had yet, before the date of his "Religious Musings," only expressed himself generally against the stamp of fashion, and in favour of the genuine tones of the heart. Now, as these ideas took greater possession of him, a firmer principle asserted itself. The bard and the philosopher are placed in conjunction. "Both brook not wealth's rivalry ; and, long enamoured with the charms of order, they hate the unseemly disproportion." Every word here is platonic. According to Plato, the Beautiful should always be

united to the Good. "The great poet must also be a character and a thinker, and therefore a great man." This opinion Coleridge always maintained, supported by Southey and Wordsworth, and in contradistinction to Byron and Scott. In this spirit he criticised a sonnet of Lamb's, in 1795, as "having no body of thought." He further sketched the following ideal in his note-book, of a poem in the style of the "Religious Musings," that it should be "peculiar, not far-fetched; natural, but not obvious; delicate, not affected; dignified, but not inflated; fiery, but not mad; rich in imagery, but not loaded with it;—in short, a union of harmony and good sense; of perspicacity and consciousness. Thought is the body of such an ode; enthusiasm the soul; and imagination the drapery."

In the "Destiny of Nations" some of his Neo-platonic views come to light. Fancy is the power that first unsensualises the dark mind; giving it new delights; emancipating it from the thralldom of present impulse; and teaching self-control, which, in the rudest myths, still preserves a glimmer of divine reason. In the same way had Plotinus conceived the Beautiful as the principle which gives form to matter (to the 'Logos'); intermixing, as he did so, scraps of mythology.

In the *Watchman* he had both motive and opportunity to show the public in intelligible prose what he meant. He began at once; and in the first number he reviewed the traditional modes of criticism as practised by the chief journals—*Gentleman's Magazine*, *Monthly*

*Review, British Critic, &c.*—and fearlessly declared his disapproval of them. Notices, without selection and study, now carelessly praising, now rudely blaming, seemed to him to have no merit beyond making a work known. Solid criticism and literary power they possessed not. In this respect his journal was to lead the way to a reform, by only noticing works of acknowledged worth—only one in each number—and that without compliments or prejudice. So far he had promised more than he could at once perform. When the notice of Mr. Ireland's Shakespeare articles—soon found to contain the stupidest misconceptions—appeared from Coleridge's own hand, it proved to be blundering enough; while his praise of Logan's ballad, "The Braes of Yarrow," was couched in general commonplaces. The higher tone which he advocated, was not so easily represented in the current language of a journal which found an early termination.

In the preface to his collective poems he promised something more. He defended the subjectivity of the Lyrical school. "It is not egotism when, in order to relieve my heart, I sing my own sorrows, but it is a law of our nature. He who labours under a strong feeling is compelled to seek sympathy, and the poet's feelings are all strong. It is far greater egotism when the reader cannot put himself in the position of the poet."

His chief criticism, however, appeared in the introduction to a "Collection of Sonnets" which he circulated among his friends, in June 1796. He here opposed the

idea of outward correctness of form, and exalted more the inner meaning. He censured mercilessly the much praised regularity of the Italian sonneteers. To him Petrarch had "one cold glitter of heavy conceits, and metaphysical abstractions"—a criticism founded only on Preston's bad translation, and which, a few years later, he humbly withdrew. Still, he maintained that the fact that a sonnet consists only of fourteen, and not of sixteen, or of twelve lines, was a mere matter of custom; moreover, that the arrangement of the rhyme should depend on the feeling of the poet. How should momentary bursts of feeling be expressed in a conventional strait-jacket! Away then with inverted sentences, and affected expressions; with the cold epigram, and the tortured prose, which are meant to pass as poetry. Let sonnets be composed in the hearty and natural style of Bowles. "Such productions generate a kind of thought highly favourable to delicacy of character. They create a sweet and indissoluble union between the intellectual and the material world . . . and thus the poem may acquire totality; or, in plainer phrase, become a whole." This was in the same sense as Plotinus, who contended that in the Beautiful, the material is moulded by the formative idea; thus uniting the confusion of many parts in one pervading whole. The merit of Coleridge did not consist in inventing these thoughts, but in directing them against the school of Pope, and in favour of the Romantic school. And not only are his own Sonnets defended in this intro-

duction but those of Southey and Lamb ; of Bowles, who now lived as rector of a parish in Bath ; of Mrs. Charlotte Smith, who resided in Chichester, and, in addition to her sorry sonnets, sent forth also some revolutionary romances ; of Charles Lloyd of Birmingham, whom Coleridge had fascinated in his canvassing tour ; of William Sotheby of London, then occupied with the translation of Wieland's 'Oberon,' and later known as a dramatist ; and with those of various other less known names. From town and country were summoned these kindred spirits to join the Bristol group, till the whole stately band sailed with Coleridge under the new Platonic flag.

While Coleridge was thus undertaking the part of a leader in *belles lettres*, he was sorely put to it to meet what he whimsically cailed "the bread and cheese question" at home. An addition to his family was impending, and yet he had taken no steps to provide a certain maintenance for his wife. Sara groaned, complained, and fell ill. The future was cloudy. "Poverty, perhaps even the thin looks of those who want bread, and look to me for it, stare me in the face" (Cottle, 22nd February).

"Why could not he write ; or at all events utilise his knowledge as a teacher ?" So thought Mrs. Barbauld, the fertile composer of juvenile works and poetry. At this time she was staying with the Estlins in Bristol, and saw nothing in Coleridge's way of life but "indolence disguised as deep philosophy," and would fain



have lectured him a little. She challenged him in an odd poem (1797) not to build his house in a labyrinth of metaphysics. "Youth, beloved of science! of the Muse beloved! not in the maze of metaphysics build thou thy place of resting. . . . Active scenes shall soon with healthful spirit brace thy mind, and fair exertion for bright fame sustained; for friends, for country. . ." Coleridge appreciated her well-meant hints, so long as they remained private, and had already dedicated a friendly sonnet to her. But the publicity of the reproof irritated him, so that in after times he often repeated his contempt for what he thought Mrs. Barbauld's *borne* effusions.

And, at all events, one larger poem was produced during his Bristol time, in 1796; namely, "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter: a war eclogue." His old hatred for Pitt reappears here, in the form of a grim joke. The three monsters specified meet in a desolate part of La Vendée, and boast of their evil deeds. "Who has sent them? Letters four do form his name." As an immediate introduction, appears a letter from "Liberty, to her dear friend Famine;" and further on we are reminded of a scene from his "Fall of Robespierre." This drama, like that, belongs to the category of horrors; though with this distinction, that the horror is not excited by rhetorical generalities, but by drastic single details. Coleridge revels here in the representation of the hellish holiday of the beasts of prey on the battle-field; of the dying mother, beaten by her starving child; of the Irish rebels

shot by the light of their own burning hovels ; and of the bloodthirsty minister condemned to be torn limb from limb, and roasted for ever. Here again his model was Shakespeare. During his last stay in London, Coleridge appears, from a Sonnet to Mrs. Siddons, to have seen, with his friend Lamb, a representation of *Macbeth*. Hence the wild hags with their fearful faces. The realistic style to which in his lyric pieces Coleridge had been converted a year before, now pervaded even his dramatic attempts ; though he never attained in them the same degree of originality. The hideous details border even upon cannibalism : Coleridge knew well what he did, and wrote in his note-book, with reference to *Lear*, "not to bring too horrid things, like *Gloster's* eyes, upon the stage." That the demoniacal humour against Pitt had its seat rather in his fancy than in his heart, we should have believed, even without the long-winded apology with which, twenty years later, in his most conservative time, he prefaces this same poem, as if to say, like the lion in the "*Midsummer Night's Dream*," "You ladies know that I one Snug the joiner am."

What Coleridge brought forth besides this, between the spring and late autumn of 1796, is confined to a few short occasional poems. Willingly would he have done more. In the summer he proposed a long list of subjects : an epic poem on the Origin of Evil ; another, in the style of Dante, on the "Excursion of Thor" ; some satires in the style of the Elizabethan Donne ; odes to

Southey and to Darwin; six hymns to the sun, the moon, and the elements, &c. Several suggestions for the last-named exist. But nothing came of it. Many a poet has been embarrassed by the external conditions of composition. Coleridge was interrupted by them. "My happiest moments for composition are broken in upon by the reflection that I must make haste; that I am too late! I am already months behind. I have received my pay beforehand! O, wayward and desultory spirit of genius!" Nor could he bear the slightest pressure from without. He could not command the Muse, as Southey did his; it was rather she who commanded him. Household cares, much as he perceived their importance, seemed contemptible to him. What he held so cheap, had no incentive for him. Not even the critical essays on Collins and Gray, and against Godwin and Paley, that he had proposed writing, came to anything. He only doubled and trebled his plans, like the outposts of an exposed army.

As writing did not succeed in bringing in bread, he sought to obtain a situation as a teacher. He deliberated for awhile whether he should engage himself as tutor in the house of a Mrs. Evans. But he was married! Then it occurred to him, as he had just begun to learn German, to undertake at once a translation of all Schiller's works; to proceed with the fruits thereof to Jena, to study chemistry and anatomy, the theologians Semler and Michaelis, and the great metaphysician Kant; and so, enriched, to return to

England, and set up a private academy for education—physical, religious, political, and literary. This was a far-reaching plan, eminently significant of his many-sided culture, but at the same time, as he soon admitted, utterly unpractical. He next seriously considered whether to turn Unitarian preacher. He had, however, some conscientious scruples—Lamb had only pecuniary ones—and the congregation had no need to hurry him to decide; which, considering the instability of his habits, was a fortunate thing for them. The sub-editorship of the *Morning Chronicle*, which he had already undertaken, “with heavy and reluctant heart,”—for he dreaded any dependence of feeling,—must at this time have fallen through. At length a fortunate circumstance delivered him from the most pressing need. Charles Lloyd, the melancholy son of a rich Birmingham man, felt himself so strongly attracted both to Coleridge’s personality and poetry, that he took up his abode with him, and contributed a considerable share of the household expenses. Coleridge made him heartily welcome. He allied himself lovingly with this poor, shy, Quaker youth, who had already given to the world a little volume of lachrymose sonnets after the manner of Gray and Bowles. But this help was only temporary, and Sara felt herself justified in requiring some certain knowledge of their circumstances; for just as the poet had departed for Birmingham in order to fetch their guest, a little baby boy had made his appearance. As the young father received these tidings, he reflected, in a mournful sonnet, upon “all I

had been, and all my child might be," and could not repress an anxious misgiving as to the future.

The manner in which he took this humiliating position to heart, may be seen in the change they created in his religious ideas. His platonic optimism was shaken, and with it his whole ideal Unitarian system. He saw that evil existed; that the principle of good is not only imperfect, but has a positive mixture of evil; that the material world is in opposition to the spiritual world; that the dictates of nature are not the same as freedom of will; and that nature is not God. He saw that these contrarities must first be reconciled; that heaven is not in and around us, but before us; that man is in many respects a miserable creature, and stands in need of the advent of a truly divine Redeemer. It was these disabusing convictions, as he himself owned ('Table Talk,' 23rd June, 1834), which restored to him the Christian doctrine. Till now he had far outstripped the Unitarians in the symbolic interpretation of the Bible; now he took a step further, and entered in his note-book, while at Clevedon (p. 9), these reflections: "Unitarians travelling from orthodoxy to atheism. Why?" Even while still disposed to become their minister, he reproached them with a falsification of the Scriptures. "If you were to offer to construe the will of a neighbour as you do that of your God, you would be scouted out of society." He suddenly felt himself so sinful that he could hardly persuade himself to believe in that satisfaction, through the sacrifice of Christ, which the Church upholds. "My

conscience revolts," he said. Whereas before he had followed his reason too confidently, through a maze of philosophy and semi-philosophy, he now lost all hold on reason. "Wherefore art thou come?" he asked himself in a severe mental struggle, while going through the tragedy of his unsuccessful *Watchman*. "Doth not the Creator of all things know all things?" (note-book, p. 16). In the next months, he formed the plan of thoroughly refuting the once so highly esteemed Godwin. "The Godwinian system of pride! Proud of what? An outcast of blind Nature, ruled by a fatal necessity—slave of an idiot nature" (note-book, p. 25). Towards the end of 1796, he was sometimes overcome by a deep mistrust of all religious thought. "Our quaint metaphysical opinions, in the hour of anguish like a plaything by the bedside of a deadly sick child" (note-book, p. 26); and almost the same words in a contemporary letter. Such fragments are like flashes of lightning, revealing for a moment the tempest of the mind. Upon the whole, he would willingly have abided by the teaching of Hartley and Berkeley. He named his eldest son after the one; and the second, who appeared on the 10th May, 1798, after the other. Almost superstitious in his desire to look on his own initials (S. T. C. = Ἑστῆσε) as a prophecy, it seemed like a spell to form another Hartley and Berkeley out of the two children. But this was the last homage he paid to his old teachers. He was sick of human knowledge, and longed only for direct communion with a comforting,

helping, personal God. He looked back with horror on what he had said in December 1794, on the futility of prayer for divine help. Suffering taught him to pray.

He now turned again more resolutely to mysticism; and no longer to Greek mysticism, but to that of the seventeenth century, as harmonising with the pessimism which now possessed him. According to Plotinus, the Creation was the result of Divine radiance; according to Jacob Böhme, of Divine discord.

These creeds had already, in the first half of the eighteenth century, found an adherent and interpreter in William Law. In the summer of 1796 they greatly occupied the mind of Coleridge, as appears from a remark in his note-book (p. 24), to the purport that he intended to write the life of Jacob Böhme. That they were only capable of proof by inward illumination in moments of ecstasy was no discouragement to Coleridge. He preferred intuition to everything else. He was interested at the same time for other similar enthusiasts—though more Christian in character; for George Fox, namely, the father of the Quakers, and for Swedenborg (who died the year Coleridge was born); whose works had already formed a congregation in Manchester. “Mem.: to reduce to a regular form the Swedenborgian reveries” (note-book, p. 22) Not that he gave implicit belief to these men. All that he thanked them for, according to the ‘*Biographia Literaria*,’ was for keeping alive his heart, and preventing his mind from being imprisoned within the limits of

any single dogmatic system. He knew that he had a cloud before him, but it was a cloud of fire in the dark desert of Doubt.

But he did not despond. In the society of Cottle and other friends he knew how to control his depression. And in a gay circle he was gay too. This, however, only shows that he had not lost a certain amount of manly pride, and elasticity of mind. In his confidential letters to Poole it was very different. "Out of the cup of hope I almost poisoned myself with despair." The future looked to him just as dark, as, two years before, on leaving Cambridge, it had looked bright.

The race of the high-minded Mecænas has never died out in rich England. Poole comprehended the situation. This gentleman, a wealthy young fellow, lived with his mother in the pretty quiet village of Nether Stowey, in Somersetshire. He was one who took the deepest interest in the weal and woe of the humblest of his fellow-creatures. He was trustee for every orphan child in the village, and adviser to the full-grown for miles around, and the fate of such a genius as Coleridge went to his heart. He had often had him for his guest, and before Coleridge's marriage, in May 1795, had proposed to his friends to raise a small income for him. But now he took the case into his own hands, begged him to come with wife and child, and offered him a convenient little house, next his own—rent only £7. Coleridge saw that he could serve Poole intellectually as much as Poole him materially. He could



therefore honourably accept the proposal, and did so with no end of thanks. And the same month witnessed his removal with wife, child, and Lloyd, from the prosaic city to the peaceful village, where his finest and most original poems were composed.

This was the end of the Pantisocratical tomfoolery. Our poet was now roused from his craziest dreams. In the way of politics he had attained some measure of common-sense; and as regards poetry, had found his own line. For the time also his worldly embarrassments were overcome. The Coleridge of this time—young, but also mature—brimful of imagination, and already the tolerably furnished poet, ought to be presented to the view of his compatriots as such, and not as the vegetating, dreaming, diddering, would-be oracular old man, as he appears in all *vivâ voce* reports, and in Carlyle's description. It is true, in spite of all, a trace of his partiality for a community of goods lingered in his blood: he never ceased to live upon his friends.

## CHAPTER IV.

NETHER STOWEY. WORDSWORTH. (NOVEMBER 1796  
TO SEPTEMBER 1798.)

“Close your eyes with holy dread,  
For he on honey-dew hath fed,  
And drunk the milk of Paradise.”

—*Kubla Khan.*

Happy Life at Stowey—Thelwall—Toulmin—Mackintosh—Wordsworth—Influence of Wordsworth—“Osorio” and Sheridan—“Ode on Departing Year”—“Destiny of Nations”—“France”—Sonnets by Higginbottom—Visit from Lamb—Opium—“Kubla Khan”—Mental Diseases of Poets—“Frost at Midnight”—“Lewti”—“The Nightingale”—“Fears in Solitude”—Coast of Devonshire with Wordsworth—Attempt to Compose together—“Ancient Mariner”—“Christabel”—Lyrical Ballads—Contemporary Criticism of “Ancient Mariner”—The term “Lake Poets”—Money Embarrassments—Preaching—Hazlitt—The Wedgwoods—Again Religious Doubts—Departure for Germany with Wordsworths.

IN Nether Stowey the idyl of Clevedon was repeated. Coleridge once more lived among meadows, corn-fields and clear brooks, while, but a few miles away, sounded the sea. Nor was the background in another direction lacking in charm; the wooded chain of the Quantock Hills lying stern and dark, with the sun setting behind them. The house also was larger and more convenient, and a stately kitchen-garden belonged to it, in which Coleridge plodded to his heart's content; and even the

want of society which characterised Clevedon, was supplied here ; so that not only nature, but his fellow-creatures contributed to place our poet for two years on a bed of roses.

Coleridge's children were the source of daily delight to him. With growing interest did he watch the first signs of thought in the little Hartley. And with paternal pride would he take the half-nude little Berkeley from the nurse's arm, and exhibit "my second son" to some passing neighbour. Returning from his walks to his beloved Sara, and her "two blooming cherubs," a tear of gratitude would start. Lloyd, his guest, has depicted this domestic happiness with vivid colours in a novel. Even that melancholy individual brightened up under these auspices. He listened with increasing receptivity and intelligence to Coleridge's talk, became a convert to Milton, Hartley and Berkeley, crossed himself as Coleridge did at certain theories of Godwin's, and only regretted that the divine scheme of Pantisocracy had been given up. Close by lived Poole; so close, that the four large elms which grew by his house, also appeared to overshadow Coleridge's humbler dwelling. A straight walk through a pasture was soon tracked between them. Coleridge was as much at home in his friend's house as in his own, and Poole's mother gave the tenderest welcome to Mrs. Coleridge. A few steps further, over a beautiful meadow, and other neighbours, scarcely less kind, were reached ; these were Mr. Cruikshank and his young wife, married on the same day as

Samuel and Sara. Citizen Thelwall, the Democrat, dwelt also in the neighbourhood. He was a little, impatient man, a despiser of religions, a blind defender of the French Revolution in every form of periodical, poem, and popular address; at the same time honest, hearty, and vibrating with energy. But a few years before, he had narrowly escaped the penalty of high treason. At this time he had exchanged politics for farming. Coleridge found a warm admirer in him, but at the same time a wholesome example of enthusiasm under control. He often undertook also a five-hours' walk to Taunton, to visit Joshua Toulmin, a Unitarian preacher and a diligent historian of that city; taking the service for him. In this gentleman he found a sober, but at the same time thorough partisan of the rights of man, who took refuge in the field of national freedom against the excesses of the revolutionary party. And when Coleridge expressed doubts as to whether the Unitarian confession could be considered a central point between orthodoxy and unbelief, Toulmin would stoutly resist him—as in a sermon of the time—with the text, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.” The correspondence with Bristol, and an extended use of the Bristol Library, were managed by a regular messenger. From time to time, also, visitors made their way thence. Of these Cottle and Burnet were especially welcome, and Lamb perhaps more so. This poor, but always witty little author—the self-sacrificing guardian of his sometimes insane sister—enjoyed

for the first time the pleasures of a country life in the early summer weeks of 1797. Bowles also, who had just recovered from an illness at Shrewsbury, introduced himself here to the inspired minstrel of his reputation, and disenchanted him! Mr. Mackintosh also, afterwards Sir James, the well-known antagonist of Burke, spoke frequently in Poole's house, but found it difficult to make himself agreeable to Coleridge, who had an insurmountable prejudice against everything Scotch. The quiet little village swarmed with authors.

Wordsworth stood foremost here. His attention had been excited by the lectures in the Corn-hall, and he had approached the young man in the spring of 1796. The great bard resided at this time at Racedown, in Dorsetshire, and said one day to a friend: "I am going to Bristol to-morrow, to see those two extraordinary youths—Coleridge and Southey." In fact, Wordsworth's name is found as early as March 1796 on a list drawn up by Coleridge of authors with whom he was personally acquainted. His own brother George is also among them. No sooner was Coleridge settled in Nether Stowey than he returned Wordsworth's visit, and was introduced at the same time to the sister—Dorothy Wordsworth—then twenty-seven years of age. The first impression he made on her was somewhat disappointing. The pale face and thin figure, thick lips, and rough black semi-curling hair, did not agree with her expectations; while he, on his own part, wrote to Cottle: "If you expected to see a pretty woman, you

would think her rather ordinary." But the homely innocence and heartiness of her character made him soon add a reversal of this sentence : " If you expected to see an ordinary woman, you would think her pretty." And in a few minutes she changed her first impression of him, and admired the animated talk, the large and full eye, " in a fine frenzy rolling," and his cheerful loving interest in every thing, great and small. From this time their meetings became more long and frequent, and the mutual sympathy more hearty. In June 1797, Coleridge stayed for several days at Racedown ; and a month later, the Wordsworths stayed at Nether Stowey. They found out there that a place called Alfoxden—a good house and fine grounds, hardly two miles from the sea, and only a short hour from Nether Stowey,—was to let, and they took it at once. " Our principal inducement was Coleridge's society," wrote Wordsworth (*Memoirs*, vol. i. p. 103). For more than ten months the closest intimacy continued. In Coleridge's words, " we were three people, but only one soul." Lloyd and Lamb were both neglected, and Sara grew jealous of her husband's long walks with Dorothy. She did not conceal this from him ; nor, on one occasion from her presumptive rival, when Dorothy arrived wet through, and showed her neighbourly confidence by borrowing a shawl. But no pouting took effect. The poet in Coleridge prevailed over the man ; literary friendship offered him gradually more than domestic union, and was destined to last the longest.

Wordsworth filled that place in Coleridge's life which Southey had given up. The older poet also hated fashionable society, with its outward distinctions and inward levellings; he contended for the restoration of more natural conditions; he had been enthusiastic in the cause of the Revolution; he was indifferent to the orthodox Church, and he had helped to clear the way for the Romantic school. He had, moreover, what Southey had not, that which Coleridge especially required from the influence of a friend—firmness of character. Wordsworth's origin was not southern, but from the border-land; he was a discreet, faithful and somewhat uncouth northerner, and hence more able to control a mind which in the restless glow of its fancy betrayed too often "the English Italy" whence it sprung. Wordsworth had grown up among mountains and lakes, and had directly imbibed their quiet grandeur. Compared with his two pale town-bred friends, Coleridge and Southey, he was robust and hardy. He knew nothing of carking cares for daily bread. He did not, like Coleridge, snatch with voracious eagerness at idea after idea with greedy grasp, losing more on the way than he succeeded in bringing home; nor did he hasten, like the careful caterer Southey, from book to book, and from fee to fee. His mode of speech was rather too slow, his attitude too stiff, and his thought too constrained. But what he had once grasped, he pondered long in his mind, till by degrees the fruits emerged full ripe. The two new friends were very

unlike; they did not rush into each other's arms like two ardent, raw youths, but they grasped each other by the hand with a feeling of profound mutual recognition. Coleridge was the ivy which at last found the oak, on which it could lean, and unfold its luxuriance. But with him the act of twining and climbing was more important than the result; with Wordsworth the result was the chief thing. Wordsworth maintained that he had seen many men who had done wonderful things, but only one wonderful man—namely, Coleridge. He, on the other hand, worshipped in Wordsworth the one great poet. Wordsworth, on every occasion, stood up for the character of his friend, while Coleridge insisted on Wordsworth's pre-eminence in verse. "He is so far ahead of you," he remarked to some doubting friends, "that he looks a dwarf in the distance."

The biographical problem of this period is to show how each influenced the other. For whether employed in the domain of life, or in that of poetic creation, each, in some way, impelled his friend forward; and if we take the sum total, it comes to pretty much the same on each side. Neither with Lamb nor with Southey was Coleridge's intercourse so happily based on equal terms. Taking, in this case, was not selfishness, but honour; and giving, not generosity, but duty.

Coleridge was the one who most required the fortifying of the will. When he moved to Nether Stowey his self-confidence was at an ignominiously low ebb. But after paying the first visit to Racedown, he wrote to



Cottle: "Wordsworth's conversation roused me somewhat." His ambition bounded up, though unfortunately, forthwith, over its limits. He returned to his idea of writing a work against Godwin's "System of Pride" (note-book, p. 24). He also began to work out a tragedy which had long floated before his mind, perhaps ever since he read the dungeon scene in Schiller's "Robbers." For in the spring of 1796 he wrote a sentence in his note-book which recurs almost verbatim in his work: "A dungeon. In darkness I remained. The neighbour's clock told me that now the May sun shone lovely on my garden" (p. 19). He planned also a gigantic epic poem, Miltonic in form and abstruseness; requiring ten years' study of mathematics, natural history, psychology, geography, history, &c., five years' composition, and five years' correction: and all these grand projects he unfolded to Cottle in the same letter in which he described Wordsworth. Later on he wished at all events to embody his observations on nature, man, and society in an epic-lyrical form; adopting the figure of a brook, as it flows from its mossy source down to the busy harbour. This would have been a cyclical poem in the style of Cowper; like one planned by Goethe in his youth, and like that also executed by Schiller in his "Song of the Bell." The tendency of the time to comprehensive forms was always tempting Coleridge to over-estimate his powers of persistence in work.

The tragedy alone was carried out; partly because Sheridan, then manager of Drury Lane Theatre, had,

through the intervention of Bowles, bargained for it ; partly, also, because the sonnets published in the *Morning Chronicle* had had unexpected success ; and further, because of Wordsworth's example. When in June 1797 Coleridge read aloud to his friend the first act of "Osorio," as the piece was first called, Wordsworth in his turn brought forward an already completed tragedy, "The Borderers"; which Coleridge unreservedly declared to be wonderful. Especially did he admire the deep touches of human feeling which are found in three or four passages in the "Robbers," and so frequently in Shakespeare. This urged him forward ; though it was without any influence on his details ; for treatment and characters had been settled in his mind as early as the beginning of June, so that he had bound himself to Lamb to finish his task in a few days ; which Lamb rightly described as "Coleridgising." These two works stood in a certain affinity to each other. They were sent together on approbation to London in the autumn of 1797 ; "Osorio" direct to Sheridan, "The Borderers" to Covent Garden, with a letter of recommendation from Coleridge to the manager ; and they both met with the same fate.

The department of the serious drama improved in the last decennium of the eighteenth century. Horrors still continued popular, but less in the way of robbers, ghosts, and tyrants, external miseries, crass romances, and empty tirades, than in inward commotions of the soul. The Revolution had developed dark instincts by making executions an everyday sight. The period of tragedies

on the Passions may be dated after 1796. Wordsworth, in his "Borderers" (1795-6), treated the passion of jealousy; Lloyd, in his "Duke of Ormond," pitted the passion of love against filial duty. Then Lamb dealt with drunkenness in "John Woodville," and Walter Scott with "Sensuality and Revenge" before a Secret Tribunal in the "House of Aspen," in 1798. In the same year Joanna Baillie, sitting sewing one hot summer afternoon by her mother's side, had planned a whole series of "Plays of the Passions"; the first volume, with both tragedies and comedies on Love and Hatred, appeared in 1798. In these, Shakespeare no longer appeared as the only model, but frequently some German writer. Wordsworth, for instance, had in the main followed "Othello," at the same time introducing the motive of the reputed unnatural father from Lessing's "Nathan the Wise." Scott put himself to school to Goethe's "Götz von Berlichingen"; and Joanna Baillie, in one of her earliest pieces—"Rayner"—interwove a trait of touching fidelity on the part of a servant from Lessing's "Minna von Barnhelm." In these foreign and contemporary writers the desired intensity of feeling was found, combined with modern ideas and conditions. To this school Coleridge attached himself with his "Osorio." In substance, true love is seen contending with fraternal hatred; in form, Schiller and Shakespeare, the dramatists of natural feeling, prevail. Of all the works we have named, this is the most important, and best illustrates the peculiar tendency of the time.

The plot of "Osorio," at least for the first three acts, is essentially taken from the Sicilian's narrative in Schiller's "Ghostseer"; subsequently worked up into a ballad by the youthful Byron, called "Oscar of Alva." Osorio—a man of the wildest passions—aims to deprive his harmless brother Albert, both of his life and his bride—by name Maria—who, in spite of Osorio's malice, and the father's (Belez) weakness, and of a fearful spiritual conspiracy designed to convince her of his death, remains true to her vanished lover. Proofs, in detail, are borrowed from the ghost scene—altar and magic lantern—discovery of the machine—an inquisitor who seizes the magician, &c. But, from the first, Coleridge felt the necessity of deviating from this model in important respects. He could not drown the good brother in a well, nor let the story expire in magic mystery, as in the play itself. The hero had to be kept alive, in order to wreak poetic justice on the delinquent. To finish his piece Coleridge made use of the closely-related plot of "The Robbers," where the bridegroom is also not killed, but only driven away; returning secretly, and quickly convinced of the guilt of his brother, and of the fidelity of his lady. The connecting link of the two conceptions is "Hamlet." The avenger, returning home, assumes a strange and half-crazy character in order to bring the guilty parties to light, and exposes the conspiracy in a play within the play. That which in the "Ghostseer" is only a mysterious episode, is here used for the alternate purpose of crime and expiation,

and made the basis of a tragedy. The lovers, however, are not sacrificed by Coleridge, but are made happy, while the avengers triumph without the guilt and remorse of Schiller's "Robbers," for they have overcome the oppressor without having infringed the moral ties of humanity. In this lies the essential difference between the two dramas. The Englishman, who wrote almost as many years after the outbreak of the Revolution, as the Suabian wrote before it, was already more moderate. He no longer saw the existing order of social things in so black a light as to believe peace and love to be incompatible with them. He no longer believed that right could be re-established by wrong, but felt that earnestness of purpose and lawful means are better defences of national freedom. Hence the metamorphosis of the "Robbers" into a band of innocent, persecuted Moors, and of an unprincipled magistracy into the Spanish Inquisition; features, as may be here remarked, which had been suggested to him by the awful tale, 'The Monk,' lately published by Lewis (1795). The political aim which in his "Fall of Robespierre" Coleridge brought so onesidedly into the foreground, considerably receded here. We still see that the world was out of joint; that tyrants had to apprehend the despair of their slaves; that mankind was sick unto death, and required the sharpest remedies. But such generalities are found before him, even in "Hamlet." The principle of the treatment is now essentially artistic.

Yet more decided was Coleridge's deviation from the

prescribed strictness in composition and style. At the same time he still related much that should have been put into action. Osorio, for example, has not a single explanation with Maria, the possession of whom was his chief aim. The complication begins before the beginning of the piece, and has to be laboriously accounted for. The essence of the classical manner lies in an analytical development of character and incident; and it is therefore here that it holds its ground longest. In other respects he introduced much natural action. The scene changes from act to act, and claims an interest of its own: at one time a wild sea-coast; then an armoury; and lastly, a cave by moonlight. The personages indulge in heart-gushings, more episodic still than in Shakespeare, from whom they are obviously borrowed. Thus the nurse in the fourth act tells the unhappy bride a child's tale—a sort of biography of Chatterton, with romantic additions,—far more poetic in itself than that in "Romeo and Juliet"; though at this stage of the play lacking due connection with the rest. At the fifth act we find Albert in his dungeon describing the sweet influences of nature—the woods, the winds, and the waters. It is a lyrical gem, though adding nothing to the development either of action or character. Both these passages had been published and appreciated, long before the drama itself, in the 'Lyrical Ballads,' 1798.

Feeling, indeed, formerly too strictly banished from the stage, now began to be overdone. The poet over-

stepped frequently the limits of the measure, in order to give full expression to the tumults of emotion. The most circumstantial directions for the actors are interposed. This never occurs with Shakespeare, Marlowe, or Ben Jonson; though frequent with the Romantic school of all nations. But the directions now are to speak "fiercely," then "wildly," "with a frantic eagerness;" and then, again, "with the deep tones of subdued emotion," or "inarticulate with rage." The high-stepping grand speeches have also given way to gentle effusions, to be accompanied with music. Pseudo-tragedy disappears, and is replaced not by tragedy but by the melodrama.

"Osorio" found no favour in Sheridan's eyes. This is the more noteworthy, since Sheridan himself brought forward an operatic treatment of Kotzebue's "Spaniards in Peru"; and thus introduced the melodrama into London with brilliant success. But Wordsworth, Lamb, and Scott had no better success with their attempts: Joanna Baillie, alone, obtained a certain respect; even Byron's "Manfred," and "Heaven and Earth," took no hold on the stage; while such a mixture of dialogue, pantomime, and music as the "Tale of Mystery," by Holcroft, the translator of Kotzebue, was (1802) given thirty-seven times in succession at Covent Garden. The cause for this was the same which then also made Kotzebue more popular in Germany with the masses, than pieces by Schiller and Goethe—a mechanical cleverness tells more in front of the footlights than all

lyrical and philosophical refinements. The great poets of the time of the Revolution despised, more or less, the traditional modes, and would only take their rules from inward feeling, and not from theatrical experience. Coleridge, for instance, thought much of little *naïvetés* which tell in reading, but never in acting "Drip, drip, drip! such a place as this has nothing else to do but to drip, drip, drip!" We can imagine how that sounds on the stage! Scarcely had Sheridan, with his experience of the theatre, caught sight of this passage in skimming through the manuscript, than he threw the whole into the paper-basket; and, lazy as he was in the use of his pen, he contented himself with remarking to an acquaintance of the poet, "Drip, drip, drip! In such a piece as this there is nothing but drip, drip, drip!" Eighteen years later, through the mediation of Byron, the piece was performed; and in Byron's own simultaneous tendency to the melodrama may be seen its chief result.

In the renewed ardour of creation which animated Coleridge as he first began his tragedy, he undertook as a commission from the *Cambridge Intelligencer*,—he was not forgotten, it appears, at the University—to write an ode on "the Departing Year" (1796). It was composed between the 24th and 26th December, was published on the 31st December, and shows his poetic power in the highest force. In the Dedication to Poole he indicates the essential qualities of the lofty ode, as "impetuosity of transition, and fulness of fancy and



feeling." That the depression of his latter Bristol time should have disappeared in Nether Stowey, was owing to the absence of material troubles, and to the intercourse with Wordsworth. But whence this fresh flight into the clouds?

The note-book shows it to have been connected with a fit of religious feeling. In the peaceful life of the country the influence of Jacob Böhme began earnestly to tell upon him. A good spell of kindred literature further contributed to this. Coleridge copied out for himself, among other things, the visions of some ecstatic virgin, with this remark: "Certainly, there are strange things in the other world, and so there are in all the steps to it; and a little *glimpse* of Heaven—a moment's conversing with an angel—any ray of God, any communication from the spirit of Comfort, which God gives to his servants in strange and unknown manners,—are infinitely far from illusions. We shall understand them when we feel them, and when, in new and strange needs we shall be refreshed by them" (note-book, p. 27). To this he appended a glorification of mystic dreams. He called "the prayer of enthusiasts, a pious drunkenness; a spiritual concupiscence." He described what sleep must have been in Paradise. "In the paradisiacal world sleep was voluntary and holy—a spiritual state before God, in which the mind, elevated by contemplation, retired into pure intellect, suspending all communication with sensible objects, and perceiving the all-present Deity" (note-book, p. 28) But the religious and the

poetic aspirations flowed on together. In the midst of such jottings we find also: "Dreams sometimes useful, by giving to the *well-grounded fears and hopes* of the understanding the *feelings* of vivid sense." And after this come sketches of single passages for his New Year's Ode. Having been long without poetic inspiration, he saw and felt the Supernatural with somnambulistic clearness.

Whence the growth of this transcendental excitement we are taught by a comparison with his next earliest poem of this class, "The Destiny of Nations." There the vision is only related as the experience of another person. Here in the New Year's Ode it occurs to himself. In both cases the introduction shows "Nature struggling in portentous birth"; but while in the earlier piece only general descriptions of discord and hope take place, now the sorrows and joys which had befallen Europe in the foregoing years come tumultuously forward. An infernal Hag again appears. Death puts an end to her. Spirits of retribution dance round her grave in darkness and mist; ghostly accessories come forth, taken from Bürger's "Leonore," which had been variously translated, and which Lamb had expressly recommended to Coleridge's attention;\* then the mystical monster is changed into the Empress Catherine of Russia, who had commanded the awful storming of Ismail. And again the heavenly Guardian-angel lifts up his voice and invokes ruin upon

\* "Leonore in England," by Professor Brandl. Excerpt from Eric Schmidt's "Characteristiken," Berlin, 1886, p. 244-8.

the conqueror. But here, instead of the Englishman of past times, the contemporary foes of peace and the slave-dealers are undisguisedly stigmatised. The supernatural atmosphere encompasses no longer imaginary, but real classes and persons. Dreams now appear as realities, and the poet's own condition of second sight the same :

“ Cold sweat-drops gather on my limbs ;  
My ears throb hot ; my eyeballs start ;  
My brain with horrid tumult swims ;  
Wild is the tempest of my heart ;  
And my thick and struggling breath  
Imitates the toil of death.”

One can no longer say that Coleridge possesses imagination, but rather that he is possessed by her.

With all this a deeply-seated innovation in metre is connected. In his boyhood he had written his odes in the learned and artificial stanzas in which the modern classicists imagined themselves to be repeating the ancient Greek choruses. After that he went over to Milton's more natural blank verse. But now, in his “Ode to the Departing Year,” he felt that these columns of equal lines entailed a conscious recitative which became burdensome to him. He chose, therefore, a free rhythm, and adapted it instinctively to the varying import of his subject. This is a rich field for the most delicate metrical changes. Here there is none of that arbitrariness with which Gray, in his “Bard,” had addressed both “Bearded majesty” and “Pale grief” in short-winded iambics. A very symphony reposes in these verses. It was long after,

that Wordsworth—for instance, in “The Skylark,”—sought with similar flexibility to adapt the rhythm of his ode to the flow of his feeling. The stronger self-control to which he had helped Coleridge, was repaid to him by the enhancement of his own technical power.

One other ode was produced in Stowey—namely, the “France” (1798),—far more temperate in feeling, and more peaceful in form. The unformed elements are no longer appealed to in the introduction, but the actual woods, waves, and clouds. But again we have the dance of spirits in wild agitation, the praise of liberty, and in the middle of the piece the politics of the day. The poet, however, is no longer the ardent admirer of France; her violence towards free Switzerland had forfeited the confidence of Coleridge, Wordsworth, and other contemporaries. The hopes that he had built on the Revolution had vanished, as far as the future was concerned. The Pantisocratist, that was to have been, now acknowledges with a sense of guilt that he had looked for freedom in the wrong place, instead of where she is alone to be found, namely, on the mountains and on the sea. A painful feeling, as if all human progress were only a pious wish, tremblingly pervades the monotonous, long-drawn stanzas. Intoxicated hope has subsided into dejection. It is obvious that the poet’s imagination, in the interim, had reached and passed its highest point. Still, the very combination of the departing glow of freedom and the growing darkness of disappointment, imparts to “France” a peculiar

charm. "The finest ode in the English language," was Shelley's verdict; and he doubtless had it in his mind when, at the beginning of his mighty dithyrambic "To the West Wind," he apostrophizes the woods, the waves and the clouds; despairing as a man, but prophetically exultant as a poet.

Wordsworth understood not only how to urge his friend on, but how to rein him in. This is apparent in the improvement of style in the second edition. What the elder poet read to the younger of his own unpublished verses, struck Coleridge most "by the absence of all forced diction and crowded imagery." Here nothing appeared to him obscure, hackneyed, or fantastic. Every word explained itself by the context. This made the greater impression on Coleridge from the fact that in his early days he had indulged far too much in rhetoric, and, in the higher class of lyric, did so still. He began now to weed the second edition far more strictly than he had done the first. Without exception, all he had written before 1793 was struck out; the same with the imitations of Ossian, and some poems on special occasions. In such verses, also, as he spared, numerous florid expressions, over-bold combinations, and high-flown tropes were rejected. This may be best traced in the "Ode to the Departing Year," though not composed till the end of December 1796. The "purple locks" and "snow-white glories" of the angels were deprived of their colours, and "the cold sweat damps" of the poet turned into normal "sweat drops."

Twenty years later, it is true, Coleridge maintained that the reviewers of the first edition had led him to make these alterations by their criticisms on his too general exaggeration. But this was not the case; on the contrary, they had praised him for tenderness of sentiment and elegance of expression. Lamb's admonitions, it was more probable, had helped; it was he, who, in a letter of November 1796, had again urged, "Cultivate simplicity—banish elaborateness." The chief critic, however, was doubtless the growing maturity of his own experience, supported by the purifying influence of Wordsworth.

And as he pruned away his excrescences in style, so he did also his political exaggerations. The revolutionary sonnets of 1794, still preserved in the edition of 1796, were one and all banished. Coleridge had meanwhile learned that mankind cannot so hastily cast off the heritage of the past, without lapsing into brutality. He now felt even ashamed of his bombastic verses on Lord Stanhope, who, very naturally, had left unnoticed the curse of "the leprous stain of nobility." In the poems that were preserved, much also was moderated. In the notorious poem to the Donkey (December 1794) he had spoken contemptuously of "the tumult of some scoundrel monarch's breast." In its stead, after 1797, we read "the aching of pale Fashion's vacant breast." As regards religious matters, he left, it is true, the atheistic expression of "the impotency of prayer" standing in the lines "To a friend" (Lamb), but only to withdraw it in a note with disgust.

And thus was his collection again given to the world in May 1797, not larger in itself, but better sifted, and again Lloyd and Lamb joined the ranks with some contributions.

When Coleridge had his proofs objectively before him, all his own faults, as well as those of his friends, stared him so openly in the face, that, under the feigned name of Higginbottom, he wrote three ironical sonnets for the *Monthly Magazine*. The one was inspired by the somewhat overdone simplicity of Lamb's writings; the next touched lightly on the trivial whinings of Lloyd; and the last lashed his own high-flown pathos. His mind was so absorbed by this subject that it never struck him that his friends might take these sonnets amiss; at all events, Wordsworth remained faithful.

Another travesty of the time concerned himself. The incident of a mad dog, which ran through the village and bit other dogs, probably gave rise to it. "Recantation" is in truth a humorous apology for his earlier revolutionary rage. An ox amuses himself one April day with harmless capers on a sunny meadow; the neighbours—one is reminded of Boyer, his master—declare him to be mad, and, in their anxiety for priest and altar, chase and worry him, till the happy creature really goes mad. The grotesque subject, the *blasé* choice of words, and the homely regularity of the verses, remind us of the involuntary pursuit of John Gilpin in Cowper's ballad. But the satirical tendency was new. For, with the most varying means—now with serious filing, now with merry

irony—did Coleridge endeavour to strip off his poetic redundances, and, as the reward, felt himself continually more in harmony with Wordsworth.

In the spring of 1797, his vein of landscape poetry burst out afresh. Clevedon had renewed itself in Stowey ; why should not poems of subjective description in the style of the "Eolian Harp," or the "Reflections on a place of Retirement," again come to birth? In point of fact, they did, and just as true, as graceful, and as grand as before ; in the same rhymeless and easy metre ; but without theological hypotheses, more intense in feeling, and yet the more simple and transparent in expression, in harmony with his more enlightened taste. It is wrong to cite always the "Ancient Mariner" and "Christabel" as his best works. In his "Reflections" there is more domestic warmth, more original thought, more artistic finish. His pictures are less strange, but they are all the more refreshing. Here we see more the man ; there, the dreamer. Here he not only causes a shudder, but teaches true devotion and wisdom. Here we may obtain from the poet, not only the entertainment of a leisure hour, but also, what he is bound to give, instruction and education for the nation.

And first we may mention the verses "To the Rev. George Coleridge," to whom he dedicated the new edition of May 1797. This was his paternal brother, the Vicar of Ottery and guardian of his boyhood. The description of the quiet happiness which he now enjoyed



in his country home is the chief theme ; the possession of a wife being increased by the joys of fatherhood and friendship. Nor are the accents of a divine voice wanting, though no longer discoursing on a pantheistic, platonic soul of the world, but on poetic immortality : with these are intermingled recollections of childhood, joyful and sorrowful, while, with grateful sympathy, his brother's lot is depicted in still more beneficent colours. Allowing for all the sensitiveness of his worthy brother, it is simply incredible that he should have considered himself attacked in his character by these verses, as Coleridge with solemn vexation explains to the public. Some of the poems, which contain doubtful matter for a clergyman, may have excited his displeasure, but not the dedication poem itself. At all events, no such narrow ideas should be permitted to interfere with the enjoyment of such a little gem.

A visit from Lamb and his sister, in June, gave birth to a similar creation. Coleridge had hurt himself in some way, which obliged him to keep the house. He had to let his guests ramble alone over the hills and to the waterfall, while he could only look at them from the garden. Seated before his door, he says, as in the "Eolian Harp,"—"This lime-tree bower my prison is." In this position he watches the sun setting slowly and gloriously, and acknowledges, with moistened eye, the government of an Almighty Power. Nor does he enjoy the glories of nature alone, for his friends are within sight, and are enjoying the same. "Richer burn, ye clouds! and

kindle thou, blue ocean!" so that the friend—who, alas! is tied to a city life,—may enjoy them the more. A sense of rapture pervades the poem. His imagination mounts higher than even at Clevedon; intoxicated with the beauty of the landscape he introduces visionary elements, as in the last weeks of longing before his marriage. The green file of long, lank weeds begins at once, as he thinks, to nod—"a most fantastic sight,"—a prelude to the dancing daffodils which Wordsworth, a few years later, celebrated in rapturous song. These verses referred to Lamb, as the dedication did to Coleridge's brother; but they arose from a view of nature which, at that time, only Wordsworth understood how to share, and therefore was alone able to stimulate.

In the same summer—1797—his feeling for landscape rose to fever heat. In a trip to the wild coast of North Devon, he was taken unwell, and had to seek rest in a labourer's dwelling. Probably it was his old rheumatic affection, or, more properly speaking, the chronic inflammation of the joints inherited from his father, which had attacked him, as we have said, in Christ's Hospital, and which he never got rid of. This is a painful complaint, but quite compatible with length of life; but the longer Coleridge stayed in the damp grounds of the West of England, the worse he became. As a remedy, he began, in November 1796, to take opium. As far as he could subsequently remember, he had adopted this mode of relief from a prescription in some quack book, without considering how easily such

a habit could be contracted. But this belongs to his many defects of memory in worldly things. The editor of the *Watchman* knew well the danger of "bad habits." But he defended himself on no lower authority than that of Dr. Beddoes. The doctor was a follower and personal acquaintance of the once celebrated Dr. John Brown, who professed to cure all diseases partly by opium, partly by alcohol, according as they originated in over-excitement or in debility. Dr. Beddoes had shortly before written a cautious but decidedly favourable preface to Dr. Brown's 'Elementa Medicina,' in which it is expressly stated (p. 230) that gout can be overcome by opium. So, like many another high-principled contemporary—as, for example, Wilberforce the slave emancipator, and the Baptist preacher, Robert Hall,—Coleridge fell a victim to mistaken advice. But upon the brain of the poet it acted, not merely as the benumber of pain, but as the source of dreams of bodily activity, and of all sorts of fancies, both pleasant and tormenting. This was the case at this time in Stowey, where he wrote long rima-roles in his note-book, half grand, half inarticulate, full of pompous words, and painful oppression, which can be only explained as the hallucinations of opium. Thus, on p. 77: "Throned angels—upboiling anguish—leader of a kingdom of angels—love fires—a gentle bitterness—wellspring—total good—sick, lame, and wounded—blind, and deaf and dumb," &c. &c.

Such medicine, therefore, as, according to his own account, he took on the occasion of this trip, may

doubtless have been opium. After a dose he would sleep—a deep sleep of the outer senses—for three hours, during which all life centred morbidly in the imagination. A country bower among green hills appeared to his inward sight; his beloved lay fondly at his side; music sounded, and a prophetic mood possessed him, inspiring both surprise and awe. This was a favourite idyllic situation with him; the same that meets us first in the “Eolian Harp.” Even the “circling honey drops,” the paradisaical sweetness, with melody in addition, repeated themselves in this mood in the same connection. Other pictures of memory also intermingled, and all tended together to conjure up the Gigantic and the Demoniac. Just before one of these sleeps, Coleridge had read in Purchas’ ‘Pilgrimage’ the account of a palace of the thirteenth century, belonging to the Tartar khan, Kublai. This palace, “the largest that ever was seen,” was surrounded with trees, meadows, and menageries; with moat, gates, and castles; and a three-fold rampart, four times eight miles in circumference. Within this enormous “pleasure-dome” lay the bower which was his favourite subject. Twice five miles of fertile ground were seen in his imagination, covered with sunny gardens and towers—with incense-bearing trees, and primeval woods. Purchas described no more, but merely says that the form and materials of the whole were so costly and perfect, so charming and so stately, that description would take too long. But the poet’s excellent memory in the intellectual

sense—supplied all gaps. Hardly awake from these trances, he would begin to write ; and if he had not been interrupted by an uninvited visitor, “Kubla Khan” would have been more than a fragment of fifty-four lines.

Scarcely ever before has the course of lyrical inspiration, which is, generally speaking, also a kind of dream, been so easily traceable. A deeply-felt situation is the starting-point. Kindred representations join, often by means of external associations, and add new features, and thus the image grows. The combining power consists in an excitation of feeling, supported by a richly endowed memory. The understanding has only to watch that no inconsistency creep in. To which side of these two qualities the balance shall incline depends chiefly on the taste of the day. In the would-be classical era feeling was too much controlled by reflection. The original mental picture did not spontaneously grow, but had to be helped on by conscious, capricious aids, according to mechanical rules ; so that the work, despite the careful arrangements of the parts, gives rather the impression of an artificial than of an organic product. The writers themselves felt this, and selected by preference subjects addressed to the understanding—such as moral poems and satires. The Romantic school, on the other hand, failed from not being critical enough, and nowhere less so than in “Kubla Khan.” Coleridge threw himself unreservedly into the inspiration of the hour. The images rose up

involuntarily before him, "like things without any sensation, or consciousness of effort." Imagination took so high a flight as to approach actual illusion; so that a psychological process became almost pathological in character. This enabled him, it is true, to indulge in the most extraordinary conceptions, or, more properly speaking, to develop an extraordinary originality. On the other hand, the neglect of reflection was sure to revenge itself. North and south, sterility and luxuriance, grace and horror, knock about together, as in a kaleidoscope. Fancy runs down like a clock with a broken spring; and in spite of all beauty, we miss that which Coleridge himself found missing in Lamb's verses—a firm and coherent body of thought.

Let us not be unjust! Every travailing mind must be measured by its contemporary opponents and followers. At the time we write we already look back from afar at the struggle between the Classical and Romantic schools. To us "Kubla Khan" is a splendid curiosity, a lyrical landscape fairy tale, which we know not what to make of. Ninety years ago this specimen of emotional inspiration evinced a bold and powerful reaction. Shelley borrowed many a curiosity from it; for example, in "Marianne's Dream" we have the Fata Morgana towers—the half-joyful, half-demoniacal sound in the lady's ears—the bursting streams of light, and the feverishly-tossing floods—all without any practical object. And again, in the "Skylark," the "high-born maiden" in a palace, and the harmonious madness of the

singer. This is why Byron, Shelley, and Keats indulge so commonly in visions, distinctly so entitled—for example, "Darkness," "Vision of the Sea," "On a Dream"—seeking in all seriousness to forecast the future, and even placing the truth of the dream before that of the waking eye. The poetic atmosphere became purified, but, in the zeal for reform, too much rarefied. The more brilliant the fireworks, the sooner were they extinguished. The early death of these poets, and of Coleridge also, as poet, is not unconnected with the revolutionary vehemence of their imagination.

The English are accustomed to speak of the opium-eating to which Coleridge and others of his time fell victims, with moral condemnation, as if it had been a sin and not an illness; just as in the middle ages the insane were looked upon as possessed. Any good doctor, with the help of cognac and coffee, would have cured them in a few weeks. As it was, a certain derangement of mind ensued, which complicated the case—the symptoms of the disease being mistaken for its cause. And the more Coleridge exerted himself intellectually, the stronger these symptoms became. Schiller found no scientific work so exciting as that of composing poetry, because it not only engages the understanding, but the whole mind. The poet is therefore at all times and in all places pursued by nervous visions. I may cite Tasso's dialogue with his guardian angel; Goethe's vision of a bluish-grey semblance of himself and fantastically sprouting flowers; also the red

light which floated before Hebbel during the creation of "Herod." And especially does this disturbance seem to have prevailed in England during the eighteenth century. It is remarkable how many authors lapsed into permanent insanity. That this was no mere chance may be gathered from the connection of their derangement with the intellectual tendencies of the time. In the first decennium, when great learning, political struggle, and literary envy prevailed, back to the time of the *Dunciad*, we find crabbed Misanthropes—Greene, the autobiographical rhymester of "Spleen," and Swift. Later, as domestic virtue and pious sentimentality came into fashion, there was an outbreak of religious mania. Collins, the composer of odes, went about in the church, sighing and sobbing with religious emotion; Smart, the translator of the Psalms, told the people to kneel down in the streets; while Fergusson, the amiable predecessor of Burns, and the gentle Cowper died in fear of eternal torments. In the time of the Revolution, and with the Romantic school, the over-strained imagination sought spasmodic enjoyments. Burns got drunk in true peasant fashion; Coleridge, and his scholar De Quincey—the last for its own sake—intoxicated themselves with opium; nor was Byron a stranger to it. Southey over-did his reading, till he fell into idiocy; Maturin, the tragedian, wrote with the consecrated wafer on his forehead; while Lamb, after a disappointment in love, which threw him for six weeks into an asylum, wrote, with pathetic recollection, to Coleridge: "Dream not, Coleridge, of having



tasted all the grandeur and wildness of fancy, till you have gone mad." In Germany the mad infection began in the period of genius with Lenz and Hölderlin. Mistiness there took the form of metaphysics; beyond the Channel that of poetic madness. An immense development of imagination took place in England, though not in healthy equilibrium. A number of interesting poetical works occur from the time of Swift to that of Byron; but, of a higher class, only on a small scale or as episodes. Well-informed Englishmen even are known to admit that their more modern poetry is only piecemeal work. Coleridge was a genuine member of this uncomfortable but genial society; the effects of opium were to be expected from him, and we need not be surprised that he should not always have waited for the pains in his joints, to take the remedy.

During the second half of 1797 Coleridge's poetry of Nature was mute, except in so far as it mingled with other poetry. It revived again in the February of the following year, retaining the old ground-tones, but the colours became more gloomy.

"Frost at Midnight" belongs to Coleridge's most original and finished works. Again he is in his own home, a sympathetic soul with him, gathering from slight and seldom observed signs the "secret ministries" of Nature. But he sits no longer out of doors, but within; summer is exchanged for winter, day for night; the music of the Eolian harp for the crackling of his fire; the song of the lark for the screech of the owl;

and instead of the Beloved, his own sleeping babe keeps him silent company. Recollections of his own youth are traceable in this poem, as in the dedication poem to his brother George; but while in that work, with all their pathos, they led to a more cheerful enjoyment of the present, here they sharpen themselves into a painful sense of loss. Joy in external things, resignation within. Idyls, touchingly pervaded with elegiac tones.

Here Shelley joined in with his wild poem, "Alastor." He also depicts himself in lonely colloquy with beloved Innocence, while "Night utters a weird sound of its own stillness." He feels himself inwardly allied with earth, ocean, air—whether in summer or winter, wind or frost. He compares the bright and always brightening impressions of youth with the sorrowful present. But while Coleridge with his mystical God of Nature feels an inner harmony, Shelley's mind is all in tumult. The more the disguise of a universal happiness was stripped from the face of the French Revolution, the more did a universal shudder pass through English poetry.

Coleridge's next work, as it appears, was "Lewti; or, the Circassian Love Chaunt" (1798). The feeling is still more pathetic here. Some unkindness on Sara's part was the cause. As once in Clevedon, so here, the Beloved is sleeping in "a breezy jasmine bower," and a little bird sings o'er her head; but it is only a figure—she herself is alienated from him. Dimly her "forehead fair" follows him through the moonlight, like

the Abyssinian maid in "Kubla Khan"; but here, as a pale and ever paler little cloud, till it floats like "the lawny shroud of lady fair that died for love" ("Leonore"). And again he stands by the luminous water, only in this dream it is white.

"I saw the white waves, o'er and o'er,  
Break against the distant shore.  
They broke in light;  
I heard no murmur of their roar."\*

Even the metre unites something of the peaceful regularity of his earlier blank verse with the free harmonious rhythm and arrangement of lines, as in "Kubla Khan"; while, here, passages and half-verses repeat themselves with intentional and hurried monotony: "Lewti is not kind." "Lewti never will be kind." "Ah! Lewti, why art thou unkind?" "To-morrow Lewti may be kind;"—till at last a sweet delirium takes his senses captive. This had a special charm for Shelley, who in his "Indian Serenade," has imitated both matter and manner. A mountain had weighed on Coleridge's breast, and that not only in sleep, but in reality.

An attempt to shake this off is embodied in a second poem (1798), "The Nightingale." Let a poor "night-wandering man, whose heart was pierced with the remembrance of a grievous wrong," echo Milton's "most musical, most melancholy," if he will; to him (Coleridge) the bird is "an airy harp," exulting in nature's joy. The beloved one is no longer mentioned; but,

\* Afterwards omitted.

instead of her, Wordsworth and his sister, with the little Hartley, share the poet's intelligence of the sounds and signs by which nature is revealed to Man. He is no longer in his garden or house, but on an old mossy bridge "you see the glimmer of the stream beneath, but hear no murmuring." And instead of the jasmine bower and flower-beds of Clevedon, he is surrounded "with a tangled under-wood,"—the whole being, in his own words, "tipsy joy that reels with tossing head."

Unrestrained, he now at last poured forth his sorrow, in the last days of April, when England was just expecting the invasion of the French—not aware that Bonaparte's preparations were directed against Egypt. In "Fears and Solitude" he shows us for the last time the joys of the husband, father, and friend, with the holy influences of the elements in a peaceful retreat—"a green and silent spot, amid the hills,"—with the lark "that sings unseen"; drawing the greater contrast between these scenes and the tyranny exercised over his fellow-citizens; between this peace, and that approaching ruin of the beloved native land, which, with shame, he describes. "Seek not rescue from a change in government. You must learn to love Nature; to revere her laws; to draw wisdom from lakes, and hills, and clouds, and to ennoble your own souls while adoring God in His creation." The misery to come hangs like a thunder-cloud over the sunny landscape. This was the farewell song which the poet added to his domestic idyls. In the verses written among the Euganean Hills, Shelley again took

up the strain, contrasting a similarly soothing and imaginary paradise with the real fact of the fall of Venice and Padua.

Not only Shelley—who in 1798 was still a child—was urged on by the creations of this time, but even Wordsworth, the older friend, who by his own strong sympathy had helped their production. Long and deeply had he nourished a similar religion of Nature, but only now did he find words to express the mysteriously educating power of earth and air over “souls of lonely places” in “The Eolian Visitations” and pantheistically coloured “Presences of Nature” (Introduction to the Prelude, 1799). Wordsworth, at all events, fully acknowledged his obligations to Coleridge. He dedicated to him his youthful poems, including the Prelude, as if to show how greatly he had influenced his intellectual development; and at the end he thanks him in so many words: “Thou hast enfranchised my thought from its earlier fear; thou hast taught me to take more rational proportions, and completed the discipline and consummation of a poet’s mind.” On his own ground, landscape-poetry, Coleridge had given more, and received but little beyond encouragement. In the art of description things were reversed; here, Wordsworth was the master.

As early as 1796, if we can rely on the date fixed in the ‘*Biographia Literaria*,’ Wordsworth had read aloud an epic fragment called “The Vagrant,” which he afterwards completed, and in 1798 published, under the

title of "Guilt and Sorrow." It swarms with carriers, hosts, soldiers' wives, and rabble, all in a country-setting, and therefore essentially in the manner of Cowper; only the scenery is wilder, and the tale worked up with awful human passions; for between Wordsworth and Cowper lay the outbreak of the French Revolution. The model for these novel features had been derived by Wordsworth from 'The Sicilian Romance,' the first of Mrs. Radcliff's tales of horror, which had appeared in 1790, just as he began his poem. A lonely ruined castle by night—suddenly deep sighs heard—discovery of a wretched woman, and a murdered traveller—a great mystery envelopes the crime. More deeply still was he influenced by Gessner's "Tod Abels," with which he had been long acquainted. Like as with the Swiss poet, the hero of the piece is a murderer from good motives; in other words, in order to bring wife and children some plunder from foreign parts. He is pursued and punished by the fury of the elements—the very rocks roll down behind him. He meets the widow of a murdered man, just as Cain meets the widow of Abel, and sees the misery caused by a crime similar to his own. And again, like Cain, he meets his own family, and also perceives the burden which his guilt had laid on his wife, and how faithfully, in spite of all, she clings to him. All this awakens the voice of conscience in him, so that he invokes judgment and vengeance on himself. But what surprises us most in this fable, namely, the moral goodness of the murderer, appeared by no means strange

in the eyes of his contemporaries. Noble villains were then common. Also, that the mythical Cain should turn into a real Englishman, was nothing out of the way in the democratic character of the literature of the day. But it was something new to credit landscape with an active agency in human deeds.

Coleridge was deeply touched by "The Vagrant." He also had the power of conjuring the incidents of nature into words. But he had never dreamt of using her incidents for tragical ends. His own experiences in Stowey now brought these materials the closer to him. Did he not appear to himself, in his opium dreams, like a tortured culprit to whom the appearances of Nature assumed monstrous and delirious shapes? Thus he only needed some outward impulse to use his pen in a similar way.

In midsummer 1798 he started on a trip with Wordsworth along the southern coast of Devonshire. They came to Linton, and saw the striking rocky gorge called the "Valley of Stones." Here Coleridge conceived the plan of representing the murderer of Abel in his wretched wanderings. He had already returned to the inn at Linton, when a thunderstorm broke over the scene, and without his hat he ran down the long road to the valley, in order there to study the effects of the storm from life. Then he at once began to write the "Wanderings of Cain." The first part was assigned to Wordsworth, keeping the second part for himself, for which in hot haste he threw off a sketch in prose, with a few leading

verses. Cain is represented as a kind-natured murderer, tormented with remorse. He has the tenderest love for his little son Enos, who accompanies him in the desert. He hears the angry voice of God in the roaring torrent and in the tumult of the wind; he sees God's terrible image in the clouds. The curse on him, and his soul's anguish are perceived in his faint, wasted form, in his sullen, glaring eye, and in the agony expressed in his countenance. In this state he meets the spirit of Abel, mournful, like a Homeric ghost, and sees into what suffering he has plunged his brother. It is evident how little he gathered from the Bible, and how much from Gessner and Wordsworth! Immediately the landscape assumes a dreamy double character, like as in "Kubla Khan"—moonlight and daylight together, cedars and firs, blossoms and fruits. In "Guilt and Sorrow" both landscape and people were specifically English. Here a new world opens to us, circumstantially described, with foot-prints in the sand, with squirrels sporting in the trees, with rich forms and deep colours, but hanging in the air like a northern light—a world belonging to all time, and yet to no time; having its own steadfast but mystical laws, over which the imagination and not the reason is the ruling power. Wordsworth aimed more at matter-of-fact consistency, Coleridge at transcendental; the first was the healthier, the other the most ambitious. The one lighted up the commonplace with a gleam of angelic light, fulfilling Goethe's words: "Märchen! doch so wunderbar, Dichterkünste



machen's wahr."\* An anecdote of the time (Hazlitt) will help to define the distinction between them. Coleridge was angry because Wordsworth refused to believe the fairy and ghost tales of the country people. He believed them all, through thick and thin, though, like all the Romantic school, only with his imagination. He therefore, as a poet, conceived the supernatural element more powerfully, and brought it more into the foreground. Wordsworth had marked out the direction of the proposed work; but Coleridge followed it with such originality, that the first attempt to work together, as once before with Southey, proved it to be impossible. When Wordsworth saw the outline Coleridge had sketched—the ink was scarcely dry—he screwed up his lips with his particular smile, and with a look of humorous despondency pointed to his own paper, which was almost a blank sheet. That sobered Coleridge, who felt then that his ideas were too far-fetched; he threw his sketch laughingly aside, and the "Ancient Mariner" was written instead.

The foundation of this story, according to Wordsworth, was a dream of his friend Cruikshank's, in which a skeleton ship, filled with figures, had appeared. The idea kindled in Coleridge a number of kindred images. He was accustomed to wander of evenings on the shore to the north of Stowey, and watch a vessel emerging to sight on the open sea—first a little spot

\* "Fairy tale, however wonderful, the art of the poet will make it true."

between himself and the setting sun ; then a dark little cloud ; then a shadowy form, mast and yards, black as iron cross-bars ; while the solitary character of the coast helped to heighten the ghostly impression.

But whence did he take his corresponding figures ? Literary recollections helped him. A phantom vessel occurs in Shakespeare. In "Macbeth" a witch sails to Aleppo in a sieve, in order to wreak her malice upon a sailor whom she hates :

" I will drain him dry as hay :  
Sleep shall, neither night nor day,  
Hang upon his penthouse lid ;  
He shall live a man forbid :  
Weary sev'n-nights, nine times nine,  
Shall he dwindle, peak, and pine :  
Though his bark cannot be lost,  
Yet it shall be tempest-tost."

Here Coleridge found his spectre sailors—Nightmare and Death—the last the less cruel—who, with similar result, cast lots for their defenceless victim—the Ancient Mariner. The supernatural part came first, then Wordsworth took it in hand and modelled the human forms.

That took place on the occasion of another trip to Linton, in November 1797. While the two poets, who were this time accompanied by Miss Wordsworth, climbed the wooded Quantock Hills, surrounded with leafless brushwood and clear little streams, they thoroughly talked over the ghostly theme. A newly started monthly periodical wanted some contributions. The

ballads were pledged before they were written, and the fees for them went to cover the expense of the little trip. Wordsworth began his co-operation by throwing upon the distressed Mariner something of the fate of Cain; the horrors of the deep which he endures being the penalty for the murder of one of God's creatures. The details were gathered from Shelvocke's 'Voyage round the World' (London, 1726). He there (p. 72) read of a captain, by name Simon Hatley, a discontented, cruel, splenetic man, who later, on account of his piracies, was taken by the Spaniards. The same, on a fearfully cold and stormy passage, far south of the Terra del Fuego, saw a black albatross, the only living thing in the wide waste of waters, who soared round and round the vessel for many days. The captain accordingly imagined in his superstitious way that the dark, disconsolate-looking bird had something to do with the bad weather, and in one of his gloomy fits shot the albatross, "not doubting" (perhaps) "that we should have a fair wind after it." The guardian spirits of Nature, of whom Coleridge often sang in Stowey, revenged the murder; and the ship's company agreed to put the mark of Cain on the criminal, by hanging the body of the albatross about his neck.

And the sequel? How was the unfortunate Mariner to escape finally from the "Nightmare, Life in Death"? Coleridge must somehow have known the epistle of Paulinus, Bishop of Nola, addressed by him in the second half of the fourth century to Vicarius, the Vice-Prefect of

Rome, telling him the wonderful fate of a stranded corn vessel (*Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1853); and as the owner of the Lucanian coast, on which it had grounded, would not give it up, the Bishop declared it to be a prize rescued by the Almighty Himself, which no man, unpunished, could withhold. It had been wrecked near Sardinia, and deserted by all the crew, except one man who was forgotten at the pump. This man suffered an awful solitude, had no food for six days and nights, and longed for death. At length the Lord had compassion on him, and gave him new life "with the food of His Word." He commanded him to hoist sail; and scarcely had the man raised himself for the work, than he saw "angelic hands busy about the task." He no sooner touched the rope than the sail moved to its place, and the ship resumed her course. Sometimes he saw an armed band on board who directed her movements. The "Pilot of the World" steered; and after a voyage of twenty-three days, brought her safe into port. Some fishermen, inspired by the Lord, seeing the ship in the offing, put forth from the land in two small boats. But when they reached her they were in the utmost terror, for she looked like a man-of-war full of soldiers. The fishermen prepared to flee, when the cries of the old man brought them back. The ship was towed in triumph into the harbour, the man was landed, and related his adventures with tears of joy.

But a different conclusion was required. In the story (as aforesaid) the vessel comes into the harbour; here

Coleridge makes her go "down like lead," like the horse in the wild hunt, in "Leonore." One more personage was wanting, in order to pronounce blessing and atonement. This part, as often in such romances, fell to the Hermit. The scaffolding of the ballad was thus complete.

The poem was enriched with emotional images. Not that these lyrical elements were added after the epic features had been decided; on the contrary, the example of "Kubla Khan" shows that all took form *pari passu*. No personal experience had helped. Coleridge, strange to say, had never been at sea, still less at the North Pole, or at the Equator. This accounts for his making the furrow follow the ship, instead of streaming off from it, a mistake which he first corrected in the second edition after his visit to Germany.

The poet's extensive reading about distant countries and seas stood him in good stead. In the "Destiny of Nations" he had adopted the History of Greenland by Crantz in describing the drifting field of ice, where "the white bear howls in agony." Here in the "Ancient Mariner" he transposed the scene first to the South Pole, with "snowy cliffs" and "ice mast-high, as green as emerald," and fearful cracking and splitting sounds. Here also he speaks of a calm in mid ocean; of the horrid slimy things, "upon the shiny sea," and of the intense joy when again "the fair breeze blew." The opportunity was too attractive. The ship was to reach the Line and remain there, till 'the sea became stagnant with

sparkling reptiles. In these monsters he seems to have taken particular interest, and to have consulted various zoological works ; for the note-book of this date contains long paragraphs upon the alligators, boas, and crocodiles of antediluvian times. Coleridge also repeats ideas from his own songs, as he makes the contrite sinner hear the song of the skylark, and "the noise of a hidden brook"; all that is apparently only accessory, but it gives the ballad its chief charm. It had its effect also on succeeding poets, though no one imitated the fable itself. Thus Walter Scott in the "Lord of the Isles" describes a ship in peril, in a phosphorescent part of the ocean, as surrounded with "elfish lustre, and lucid flakes," and refers expressly to Coleridge. And Byron also, in his dream of the destruction of the world, called "Darkness," would scarcely have depicted the return to chaos as a rotting sea with fallen sails, if the "Ancient Mariner" had not been in his mind.

It was a delicate thought to put the weird tale not into the author's own mouth, but into that of an ancient mariner, who relates it with dreamy recollection. The "wedding guest," met in the street, is compelled to listen to the last sentence ; for such is the power exercised over him by the narrator, that "he cannot choose but hear." Doubtless this is a feature taken from life, for such a fascination did Coleridge himself exercise over his hearers. Something was also derived from other sources. Monk Lewis, in his tale already alluded to, had introduced a ballad, "Alonzo the Brave

and the Fair Imogen," which became at once popular. It commenced with Imogen's wedding banquet. While the bride is dancing she suddenly sees a knight next her, who never leaves her side; she trembles as she discovers him to be the ghost of a former lover, who has fallen in the wars. Thus the narrative of the uncomfortable mariner is addressed to a wedding guest, so that the music of the dance is heard through the fearful tale. Monk Lewis' lover, who carries off the bride at midnight to his grave, is obviously taken from Bürger's "Leonore," he having been one of the first introducers of German ghost tales. Bürger's work therefore influenced Coleridge both directly and indirectly. It is in the nature of such ghostly stuff always to recur, and in spite of their strange features to be always repeated.

The metre of the "Ancient Mariner" appears on the first view to be the same doggerel as that of the "Devil's Thoughts." This had hitherto been used by poets in a comic sense: Coleridge inspired it with a tremendous meaning. The Romantic school crossed themselves, where people before had only laughed. The consequence was that Coleridge found himself suddenly plunged into the form of the old 'Percy Ballads'; only he suited the irregularities of the metre, owing in the old ballads to carelessness and incorrect rendering, to the varying tones of his subject. The naïve artlessness of the Middle Ages became in the hands of the Romantic school an intentional form of art. This opened the

door to the peculiarities of style observable in "Chevy Chase," in the "Battle of Otterbourn," &c. It would be too much to say that Coleridge led the way to this innovation; archaic words, epic formulas, and short popular proverbs had already been introduced by Chatterton. The interrogation as an enlivening element in burlesque narrative had never died out. Coleridge himself had applied it in a comic sense in the "Devil's Thoughts"—("and how then was the devil clad?"); while in the serious ballad William Taylor had restored it in his translation of "Leonore." But the significant ejaculation, "Heaven's mother send us grace!"; the apparently pleonastic attributes ("Man of woman born"); the sympathetic asides ("I fear thee, Ancient Mariner"); the protestations, and not least, the leaps and bounds of the narrative, which require a marginal glossary in prose,—all these energetic symptoms were applied anew by Coleridge. Nor, as in his metre, was Coleridge satisfied merely with adopting the old-fashioned popular forms of art, but he added to them all sorts of strange features of his own. The Ancient Mariner, for example, swears by his "grey beard," as if he were a Turk. The Romantic school has always had an eclectic tendency.

I have thus ventured an attempt to analyse the course and origin of one of the most original poems that ever was produced by man; not in order to lower the poet as a pilferer from others, but to draw attention to the deeper difficulties and higher qualities of his work. The



component parts were supplied to him, but their novel and organic combination was his own; and in art all depends on this power of construction. The real artist comprehends these things intuitively; but to the conscious psychologist they are as hidden as is the origin of life to the biologist. At the same time, it is well worth our while to track the artist's footsteps; for the nearer we can come to him, the more we instinctively feel the action of genius, both in detail and in general laws; the more keenly we pry, though with feeble eye, into the workshop of the creative mind, the more completely shall we understand the beauty of the creation. The history of human culture and also antiquarian questions are not to be neglected, but the inquiry into the inner processes of poetry is the chief aim of the history of literature. They teach us to perceive with a deeper and fuller perception, and therefore with a higher enjoyment.

In the execution of the work Wordsworth was again reduced to inactivity. After the rude outline had been settled, he could only contribute a single verse here and there. His way was not to embody spirits, but to spiritualize men. He would like to have given the *Ancient Mariner* "character and profession" (see Lamb's correspondence); while Coleridge, feeling that the figure he had created had no form or stability for the actual world, wisely held aloof from anything definite in time, country, or worldly position. Wordsworth wanted the dead sailors to return to life the moment they touch the

sails ; but this would have impaired the dreaminess of the impression ! Nor did he even approve the style ; he wanted not only to have classic forms avoided, but also every rhetorical turn. His idea was to use a homely, peasant-like style, such as he sought in his own poems, though even there not with consistent simplicity. He therefore soon felt himself rather an obstructive element in the composition of the poem, and took his leave of the uncomfortable ship, which now floated more freely without him. The two poets dwelt at the opposite ends of the same English romantic school. They had the power to alternately attract, strengthen, and complete each other, but they could not penetrate or permeate each other. Coleridge even soon regretted having admitted his friend to so much voice in the composition. He saw that the story, by the admixture of guilt and penalty, was being used to point the moral of hurting no animal, which assorted ill with the supernatural basis ; indeed, contradicted it rather ridiculously. He accordingly repaired its faults, and then applied himself—at latest in November 1797—to an unmitigated fairy tale—“Christabel.”

“Perhaps ’tis pretty to force together  
Thoughts so all unlike each other ;  
To mutter and mock a broken charm,  
To dally with wrong that does no harm.”

In “Christabel,” the personages are taken from fairy-land, treated, it is true, allegorically. Christabel herself is derived from the first book of the “Fairy Queen,” where

Una—the lovely, pure, and noble maiden—is the impersonation of true holiness. Like her, Christabel bears a secret trouble in her heart. Her true knight is far away, and she enters alone into a dangerous forest to pray for him. Her enemy Geraldine, in similar fashion, is like Spenser's Duessa. She is in reality a sorceress; in which respect Coleridge's idea was not new. Her proper form is half woman, half serpent. But, versed in all forbidden arts, she is able to assume the appearance of a beautiful and innocent lady, takes the false name of Fidessa, and deceives the best of knights; for her real character is Falsehood. Not that Spenser was the inventor of this changeful apparition, for her ancestry ramifies through all the Middle Ages. The amicable conjunction of two such incompatible characters; the horrible, and yet captivating magic of the sorceress; the mental conflict of the outwardly defenceless maiden—this strange and romantic position is all the ballad is meant to portray.

It is true an ingenious attempt has been made to interpret the personages and action in an allegorical sense (Coterill). But all the genuine allegory in it belongs to Spenser, and Coleridge has simply taken it over. In the conclusion of the 'Biographia Literaria' he owns that he intended by "Christabel" nothing more than a common fairy tale. He, however, so altered and twisted Spenser's arrangement of the personages, that the allegorical meanings proper to each can only land the cleverest expositor in a puzzling labyrinth of hy-

potheses. The knight, who is the object of contention between the two women, is with Spenser not Christabel's lover, but her father. Probably he amalgamated the fable of the "Fairy Queen" with the "Marriage of Sir Gawayn" ('Percy Ballads'), where a false lady practises magical arts upon the young and beautiful Guinevere in the Green Wood, and gains Guinevere's old father for her lover. In the continuation of the poem, which Coleridge planned, but never executed, the witch was intended, like Spenser's Archimago, to take the form of the lover, and thus doubly to torment poor Christabel. But no ethical rules prevail here. All rational ideas are, as in Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream," thrown overboard from the first. For what can we make of a noble maiden who steals into a wood at midnight in order to pray for her lover! The moral pedantry of the eighteenth century, which is so apparent in the "Ancient Mariner," was banished from this poem. An uncanny but interesting play of fancy is brought before us, the materials for which were furnished by the early ages of Song, but here carried out in times nearer to us. All that Coleridge mingled with it was only intended to heighten "the giddiness of heart and brain," as he says in the last verse but three.

To the materials of the narrative the forms had to be adapted. They are therefore more fantastic than in the "Ancient Mariner." It is the same unfettered metre which Coleridge, following Shakespeare's example, used

in "Fire, Famine, and Slaughter," only intended to give a far greater dramatic effect to the narrative. As regards the style, there is an accumulation of question and interjection, the great homeliness of single words enhancing the expectation of extraordinary things. Where, for example, the 'Percy Ballads' had "swift as winds can be," and where Chatterton "quick as thought can be," Coleridge follows Spenser's example with the startling "as fast as ever can be." As regards composition, the lyrical was placed more boldly in the foreground; for the further removed from reality the subject, the more was needed for actual sight and feeling. The first part of "Christabel"—and that alone was composed in Stowey—consists, properly speaking, only of three scenes, each of which demands a swift pencil: the forest where the maiden finds the diabolical Geraldine; the castle hall through which she conducts her unholy guest; and the bedroom in which, with giddy senses, she sees the real form of the monster. All is so harmonious that one might as well describe three movements of music. And finally the Coda takes up the first and third movements, leading the whole to the wretched scene of the next morning. The Romantic school not only breaks through those frontier lines to which the classicists strictly adhere, but poetry itself is made to mingle with the sister arts of painting and music; and thus the most varied elements were combined to conjure up a new imaginary world. Nowhere is that license of form, for which the revolutionary epoch unceasingly strove, more distinctly im-

printed than on "Christabel"; which indeed became the chief agent by which that license was transmitted to the next succeeding poets. Walter Scott adopted the chief peculiarities of metre, style, and composition in his first work—"The Lay of the Last Minstrel"—and owed to them the greater part of its success; one particular ejaculation to the Virgin Mary he borrowed literally. He retained these peculiarities more or less in his subsequent poems. Byron also used them in his first essay—"The Giaour"—and often afterwards, though with considerable alterations. Not till after the War of Independence did a purer classic feeling take the lead.

The first of the three scenes, the meeting in the wood, grew mainly out of a suggestion by Spenser. In the "Fairy Queen," Una, rambling in the wood, longing for her lover, has laid herself down in the dark shade, where she suddenly perceives "a ramping greedy lion," who, however, gently licks her hand. In a similar place Christabel meets the apparently amiable sorceress. But the scene is here connected with the "Vagrant," in Wordsworth's 'Descriptive Sketches,' seated weary and forlorn in a wood. This introduced a number of landscape features—the gloomy clouds, the faint moonlight, the howling dog, the "drowsy crow of midnight cock," the striking of the distant clock. The epic poets of the Renaissance were content to describe fairyland in general terms; Coleridge brought in actual details. He helped himself, also, from the same source which Wordsworth had used; namely, from the last scene in the "Mid-

summer Night's Dream," where the wolf is made "to howl to the moon,"—

"Whilst the scritch-owl, scritch'ing loud,  
Puts the wretch, that lies in woe,  
In remembrance of a shroud ;"—

and the grave "lets forth its sprite," here represented in the person of Geraldine. As respects her, the manner and time of her appearance had already been indicated by Spenser. Duessa shows herself in full beauty, adorned with jewels, modestly entreating; but at Easter time such nightmares are seen in their proper form. Geraldine's previous history he took chiefly from Taylor's translation of Bürger's "Leonore," where, according to the lady's own story, she has been carried off upon a wild horse, and left in the wood half dead with fright. Scott and Byron, also—the one in the "Bridal of Triermain," the other in the "Siege of Corinth,"—have introduced female apparitions with involuntary likeness to "Christabel."

The second scene—in the castle—was suggested by Mrs. Radcliff's 'Romance of the Forest.' Externally it is not only the same—situated close to a wood, the gate "ironed within and without," the painted window, &c.—but it contains the same inhabitants; a morose old father, and a beautiful young maiden whose mother died in her infancy. Here, as there, we enter with a lady who has been carried off, and who is hospitably received. We see the daughter of the house stealing noiselessly up the stairs. Following a wide-spread

popular belief, the witch is helped over the "threshold of the gate," by which she is supposed to gain power over the occupant of the dwelling. The ballad of "Alonzo the Brave and the fair Imogen" also contributed something—the "angry moan of the mastiff," and "the tongue of light" from the hearth, as soon as a bad spirit like Geraldine passes.

Third scene—the bed-chamber. Spenser makes the lower, bestial half of the sorceress appear on occasion of a bath. Coleridge could not have managed such an incident in an old castle in the dead of the night. He therefore makes her share Christabel's bed, for reasons that he presumably took from Mrs. Radcliff's '*Mysteries of Udolfo*'; namely, that the lord of the castle is ill, that all noise must be avoided, and that therefore Christabel can arouse no servants. From the same work he took the idea of concealing the nature of the horrible sight as long as possible. The daughter, in Mrs. Radcliff's tale, sees a curtained picture in an out-of-the-way room; she draws the curtain, and beholds something so unspeakably horrible, that she loses consciousness. The authoress uses this as a means of heightening the reader's curiosity, and only tells us towards the end that it is the wax model of a half-putrified human body. In the same way Coleridge breaks off the narrative just when expectation is most excited; when Christabel, having seen "a sight to dream of, not to tell," can neither speak nor stir. He intended to disclose the dreadful secret at the conclusion, which he never wrote. But by means of this



silence he produced an effect which no words could have conveyed. Having kindled the imagination, he leaves it to conjure up all that is most appalling. His friend Lamb had good grounds for dissuading him from finishing the tale; the mystery, half intentional, half accidental, enhances the sense of the Supernatural. The Classic school, which especially insists on deductive coherence, abjured such restless forms of art; but the Romantic school, on the contrary, delighted in them the more, as a means of exciting, without satisfying, the imagination. Scott, in his "Marmion," alludes often and from the beginning to the great crime his hero has committed, but only after long delay and tension are we allowed to know what it is. Byron also gives no clear idea of the dark deeds with which the minds of his Lara and Manfred are burdened.

Compared together, the poetic value of "Christabel" depends less upon structure and characters than that of the "Ancient Mariner," and more on the lyrical elements of feeling. This is also the case with Keats' closely related ballad, "The Eve of St. Agnes," where the part of Geraldine is taken by a lover.

By the 18th of February, 1798, Coleridge had finished the first part (in 327, and later in 332 lines). He writes to Cottle: "I have finished my ballad. It is in 340 lines"—a statement which fits no other poem of this time. Four more parts were still to follow; and had the Muse befriended him, he would, in spite of Lamb, soon have added them. The second part he

is known to have written two years later in Keswick. He describes the morning awaking in the castle, and how the lady leads her evil companion to her father; and how he falls into her snares, and sends "Bard Bracy" to acquaint Geraldine's father where she is. With his wonted power, Coleridge contrives to show the ensnaring and poisonous expression "with somewhat of malice, and more of dread" of "the snake's small eye," as it seems to shrink in the foul lady's head—a Satanic heightening of the prophet's "flashing eye" in "Kubla Khan"; and imitated by Scott in the wedding feast in the "Bridal of Triermain," and by Byron in the "Giaour." But this pretty well exhausts the magic elements. The warning dream of "Bard Bracy," in which he sees a dove in the power of a green snake, is only a variation of the same form of simile given more forcibly at the beginning. Gentle human tones are soothingly intermixed; namely, in a praise of that friendship which had once united the two fathers. But beautiful as these are, they harmonize ill with the general character of a fairy tale. It is also sunshine instead of moonlight; moral observations and historically-sounding feudal names join in; style and metre grow more subdued, and youth's genial play of fancy seems to decline. As long as he lived, Coleridge intended to continue the tale, but he never seriously took it in hand. "Pantisocracy," "Kubla Khan," and "Christabel"—his most brilliant undertakings—remained *cluse* fragments; and, strange to say, we are glad they

in.

Two more ballads of similar nature were begun in Stowey. The first is the history of a curse, called the "Three Graves." According to Coleridge's own account, he sketched the plot in 1797—presumably after writing "Christabel." Here again an innocent bride suffers from the arts of a malicious woman—this time her own mother; who drives the poor girl almost to madness with her wicked curses. The incident itself has quitted the sphere of fairyland for that of plain prose, being founded on real fact, while the personages belong to homely life. The tale takes its rise from the mother's wretched and hopeless passion for her daughter's lover; related by the grave-digger. The poet soon felt that he had made a mistake, and therefore only finished the third and fourth parts.

The other poem is inscribed "Ballad of the Dark Ladye," and appeared first in the *Morning Post*, Dec. 1779, showing by its affinity to "Christabel" that it belongs to this period. The introduction is of well-known beauty, and derives its charm both from landscape and erotic lyrical elements. The lover reminds his mistress how he had once told her a tale of love and woe; how, leaning near her, his harp had sounded tones of mingled fear and devotion, as in the "Eolian Harp," and in "Kubla Khan." He had sung of a lover who, "crazed by cruel scorn," as he had described himself in "Lewti," had roamed the mountain woods, "nor rested day nor night." A beautiful angel sometimes stood before him, though he knew it to be the evil spirit—Geraldine. Only when he had given his life for his

lady, and lay dying in her charge, did she own that she had loved him. This was subsequently imitated in Keats' "La Belle Dame sans Mercy." After the introductory story of the heartless lady, follows "the sister tale" of the equally heartless knight. He has brought a young maiden to misery, pining for his love, and he now comes to fetch her for their marriage. He proposes to conduct her to his home in the dark, "beneath the twinkling stars." But she shrinks from the thought of darkness, and wishes to be led from her mother's door "in the eye of noon," surrounded with bridal companions. And here the fragment breaks off; probably because Coleridge knew how closely it bordered upon "Leonore."

One would have thought that these ballads, written in the very flowering time of fairy tales and dramas, would have met with immediate success. But that was not the case. First appeared the little volume with the "Ancient Mariner," with the "Nightingale," the two moral episodes from "Osorio," and the earliest short poems by Wordsworth. It was published by Cottle, with the appropriate title, 'Lyrical Ballads.' Mercenary for the multitude! The sort of criticism that ensued may be judged from the example of the *Monthly Review*. The incident of the Nightmare was called "the strangest cock-and-bull story that ever we saw." "Poetical touches of an exquisite kind, but no poetry: the style, artificial rust." Even friends had no pity for the unfortunate Mariner. Wordsworth made

him the scapegoat for the failure of the whole collection, while Cottle's withdrawal from business reduced its value to *nil*. Southey spoke disparagingly of the "Dutch attempt"; Lloyd would have liked more metaphysics; Lamb alone showed enthusiastic admiration and sound criticism. Coleridge joined whimsically in the general condemnation, as seen in the following lines :

"Your poem must eternal be,  
Dear sir, it cannot fail;  
For 'tis incomprehensible,  
And without head or tail."

When the 'Lyrical Ballads,' in 1800, reached another edition, another volume was added. To this Coleridge made only one contribution—the introduction to the "Dark Ladye," which attracted no attention. Thus warned, he rightly kept back his other fragments from publication. We can guess the sort of reception which the still stranger introduction to "Christabel" would have received. Those interested in it had the pleasure of hearing it recited. For fifteen years the poet contented himself with reading it aloud to friendly circles, and letting it be widely copied. In this way he personally amplified and explained the text, introducing the marvellous images to his hearers with melodious sing-song; his expression varying with the nature of the subject. He thus gained admiring pupils, who disseminated a juster taste, raised their hearers to the level of the poet's aim, and gradually inspired a large circle with a due appreciation for the new literature. Scott's

poems, also, had accustomed the public to the style and metrical peculiarities which prevail in "Christabel," and Byron's recommendation at length brought the poem before the world in 1816.

As regards the history of English literature, these 'Lyrical Ballads' exemplify the complete development of the English Romantic school. Coleridge—the platonic leader of the Bristol circle—introduced realistic imagination into supernatural subjects; Wordsworth, into natural subjects. Had the latter gone into philosophy, he would certainly have adopted the Aristotelian type. Each was aware of his power to supplement the other, and they accordingly—as they themselves relate—divided the realm of poetry between them. Both had now attained the summit of their capacity. What they composed after the 'Lyrical Ballads' is in many respects beautiful and great, but it opened no new paths, being only a further application of the art each had already acquired. Southey also gained his highest elevation, in 1800, by his oriental epic, "Thalaba." All were now full-grown poets. In the nineteenth century they only sought for more development in prose—their poetic powers indeed declined; first in Coleridge, who over-stimulated his fancy by opium; but in the others from a cause common to all. The Muse had been nourished by a confident enthusiasm for freedom and human progress, and this declined with the rise of Napoleon's power. The ideals of their youth had begun to wane, and with them waned also their creative

power. To this must be added the influence of the public, now not only sobered in character, but becoming critical and irritable where it had been formerly credulous and sympathetic. An angry disgust at every Jacobinical symptom soon swept the ardour for progress, for the time being, out of the country. Love of country began to be preached, instead of love of mankind; and our poets shared the decline as they had shared the rise of the French movement for freedom.

I call them "our poets," but can no more characteristic a term be found for friends so closely allied? In England they are called the "Lake school," which means neither more nor less than that their leaders migrated within a few years to the Cumberland lakes; Wordsworth and Southey for good, and Coleridge for a time. They were friends by nature, but the epithet of "Lake poets" is as one-sided as were the political opinions of the *Edinburgh Review* which bestowed it, and which was hostile to men who now rose up against the so-called Liberalism—or rather against the reactionary France of the time. "Lake school" is a name, but no designation. This was felt in England, where many critics have accordingly fallen into the opposite extreme, and maintained that the members of this group of poets had nothing in common beyond their personal and accidental conditions. As if they had only lived together, and not worked together! In truth they were bound together by many a strong tie, and above all by one of a polemical kind; namely, by the

aversion for the monotony that had preceded them, and by the struggle against merely dogmatic rules. Unbending uniformity is death! Let us be various and individual as life itself is. Let us stand up for liberty when threatened by monarchical caprice; but let us hold to the old paths when caprice, in the name of freedom, seeks to change them. Let us avoid the mere smooth surface of society, and rather wander, hermit-like, through nature, or plunge into the vortex of the people. Away with dry Rationalism. Let us fight it with all the powers we possess; whether by bold Platonism, or humble Bible faith; whether by enthusiastic hymns, or dreamy fairy tales; whether by the fabulous world of distant times and zones, or by the instincts of the children in the neat village. Let us abjure the ever-recommended nostrum of imitation of the old masters in poetry, and rather attach ourselves to homely models, and endeavour, with their help, lovingly and organically to develop their inner life. These were the aims of Walter Scott and his Scotch school, only with such changes as local differences demanded. Individuality in person, nationality and subject, and therefore the emphasis of all natural unlikeness, was the motto on both sides of the Tweed. And, as these men, when confronted by elements peculiar, rare, and marvellous, designated such elements as "romantic," so may they themselves be justly called the "Romantic school."

But the term is much misused, and requires a little



elucidation. Shakespeare is usually called a romantic poet. He, however, never used the expression, and would have been surprised if any one had applied it to him. The term presupposes opposition to the classic style, to rhetorical deduction, and to measured periods, all of which were unknown in the time of the Renaissance, and first imported in that of the French Revolution. On the other hand, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Lamb, and Walter Scott's circle all branched off from the classical path with a directness and consistency which sharply distinguish them from their predecessors, contemporaries, and successors. Their predecessors had not broken with the Greek and Latin school, nor with the school of Pope; Chatterton copied Homer; Cowper translated him; Burns in his English verses, and Bowles in his sonnets, adhered to what is called the "pigtail period"! The principal poems composed in the last decennium of the eighteenth century—not to be reckoned by the birth or death-year of the composer, but by the date of his most individual work—such works, as far as they had no connection with "our poets," adhered still more to classic tradition. In London the satires of Mathias and Gifford renewed the style of the "Dunciad," and the moral poems of Rogers that of the "Essay on Man." Landor wrote his youthful "Gebir" in the style of Virgil, and originally in Latin itself. The amateur in German literature, William Taylor of Norwich, and Dr. Sayers, interested themselves especially for those works by Goethe which bear

an antique character—for “Iphigenia,” “Proserpina,” “Alexis and Dora.” Only when the war with France drew near was the classical feeling interrupted. Campbell, the Scotchman, and Moore, the Irishman, both well schooled by translations from the Greek, recalled to mind the songs of their own people, and rendered them popular with the fashionable world—though only by clothing them in classic garb. How different to the “artificial rust” of *Christabel*; to the almost exaggerated homeliness of “*We are Seven*”; and to the rude “*Lay of the Last Minstrel*”! When at last, with the fall of Napoleon, the great stars—Byron, Shelley, Keats, and later the mature Landor—rose in the hemisphere, they had all imbibed from the Romantic school a warmer form of thought and feeling, and a number of productive impulses, though, Euphorion-like, they still regarded the antique as their parent. They expressed much appreciation of the Romantic school, but their hearts were with *Æschylus* and *Pindar*. They contended for national character, but only took pleasure in planting it on classic soil. Byron’s enthusiasm for *Pope* was not only caprice; nor was it mere chance that Byron should have died in Greece, and Shelley and Keats in Italy. Compared with what we may call these classical members of the Romantic school, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Scott—and the rest—may be said to have taken nothing, whether in the form of translation or imitation, from classical literature; while they drew endless inspiration from the Middle Ages. In their eyes

Pope was only a lucid, able, and clever journeyman. It is therefore fair to consider them, and them alone, as exponents of the Romantic school. Such discussions upon a term may appear pedantic. But distinctions in words, define differences in conception. They are the landmarks for every progress in knowledge, though the individual inquirer may find at last that in the complexity of life no frontier lines can be laid down with mathematical precision.

The delightful days in Stowey were coming to an end. Money embarrassments first supervened. Lloyd separated himself from Coleridge in July 1797, and went over to Southey, who was now studying law, talked of "hollow friends," professed "to forget all," but returned to him no more. The sonnets of Higginbottom had perhaps offended him?

By his departure the house lost its best financial support. Coleridge accordingly hastened to London in September, in order to arrange some literary work. He looked forward to a long absence, and sent his wife the means to follow him.

But in November of the same year, we find him again in Stowey. Through the much-abused Mackintosh, he had gained a good friend—Daniel Stuart, the publisher and proprietor of the *Morning Post*. He was the champion of constitutional rights, the author of a pamphlet on "Peace and Reform," secretary of the Society of the "Friends of the People," and at the same time an excellent man of business. He appreciated our

poet, and knew also how to make use of him. From that time the *Morning Post* brought out a succession of pieces by Coleridge, at different times and in varying intervals. In return every week brought a guinea to Stowey, where it was always anxiously expected.

But this did not suffice in the long run. A Unitarian preacher at Shrewsbury vacated his place in January 1798, and Coleridge seriously offered himself for it. He preached a sermon by way of trial, which, as before in Bath, treated of Peace and War, Church and State, but in a different form. The discourse had now more poetry in it and more faith in Christ. Even in his countenance there seemed to be something mystical and prophetic. An enthusiastic description of this sermon has been left by William Hazlitt, the son of a Unitarian clergyman in the neighbourhood. This gentleman was thirty years of age; a realist-philosopher of the school of Bacon and Hobbes; a good, though not very gifted, painter; solid in principle, but outwardly rough, and not easy of access. He walked ten miles from his father's house, Wem in Shropshire, one cold January morning, in order to hear the Unitarian poet. His expectations were more than fulfilled. He felt that Coleridge was the first and only man who had impressed him with the sense of genius. He declared later, when he had acquired notice as an essayist, that he had learned from Coleridge, and from no one else. He studied with astonishment in him the power of a creative fancy. How poor appeared to him now the conclusions of

the men of mere understanding! "To require definitions of every word is barricading the road to truth," was a sentence of Coleridge's which Hazlitt never forgot. This one instance suffices to show how powerfully Coleridge attracted the good people of Shrewsbury during his three weeks' stay there. He was certain of the position, though many a discriminating hearer felt what a pity it was that so great a genius should bury himself in the small chapel of a small religious sect in a small town.

So also thought Thomas Wedgwood, a son of the Cræsus of the Potteries. He was a friend of Poole, who had made him acquainted with Coleridge. He delighted in natural science, supported Dr. Beddoes' researches into gas, and even made the first practical experiments in photography. He shared Godwin's views, and at one time was inclined to join him in founding a communistic colony. The fact that he was unmarried and in delicate health, only increased his love of giving. He sent Coleridge a hundred guineas to keep him from accepting the pulpit. But our young Paterfamilias wanted continuous support, rather than passing generosity. Accordingly Thomas, and his brother Josiah, offered him an income of £150 to devote himself exclusively to poetry and philosophy. The decision was easy. Coleridge received the letter in Hazlitt's presence, when breakfasting with him, and while tying one of his shoes, made up his mind to accept the offer. He did so less for himself than for his

family, to whom, from that time, he exclusively made over the sum. Again he returned to Stowey, and the continuation of his idyls seemed to be guaranteed from that day.

But now it became evident that it was no longer material but intellectual needs which tempted him to leave his home and go forth into the battle of life. He repeated himself in his verses; he finished none of his ballads; his poetic vein seemed to be exhausted. New domains and forms of art were to renovate him! The later deeds of the French had tended to turn his political opinions in an opposite direction. Only three years before he had declared it a crime of Pitt's to have said that the only part the lower orders ought to take in the government was to obey. Now he wrote in his note-book, p. 47: "To give the common people, the ignorant, any power, however mediate or distant, in the governing of the State, is surely to depart from the broad rule of wisdom, learned in the broad experience of mankind." He hoped for nothing more from democracy; but where was he to look for counsels? His friends could not help him. Wordsworth himself was in a wavering state; even Godwin hesitated; and with the aristocrats he neither had, nor wished for sympathy. Good advice was scarce in Stowey, indeed not to be had.<sup>2</sup> Still more burning was the question of religion. Mysticism had taken the place of his need of a belief, had kept it warm, but not satisfied it. He again admitted the validity of Christianity, of the Trinity, of the Incarnation,

and the Atonement, but he still considered them to be only symbols; and without fully committing himself to them heart and soul he could not derive from them that moral and practical elevation of the soul for which, as a man of deep feeling, he longed. The fact that he was now outwardly independent of the Unitarian sect, seemed to have matured his determination to enfranchise himself from their influence altogether. The question only was how to attain this enfranchisement! He had already learned all that both ancient and English philosophy could teach him, had weighed it, and dismissed it. He wanted new premises in order to extricate himself from his state of doubt.

He looked to the Continent. With France he was thoroughly disgusted, and lost no opportunity of a taunt at the utter untrustworthiness of the French people. He rated them as much too low now as he had rated them too high before. The more promising did Germany appear to him. Poetry at this very moment was in its fullest bloom there; popular life, devoid of democracy, existed there; well-known theologians and philosophers were labouring there. In the autumn of 1797 he had begun to learn German, in order to read Wieland's 'Oberon,' and to practise himself by the translation of Klopstock's odes. Now that beneficent patrons had arisen in the persons of the Wedgwoods, who provided the means not only for his family in Stowey, but for a journey to Germany—generous acts which Eliza Meteyard, in her work, 'A Group of Famous

Englishmen,' calculated with some lack of delicacy from the books of the firm—Coleridge determined to continue his education in Germany itself.

Various circumstances contributed to this resolve. It is not pleasant to continue in propinquity with those with whom, in a religious sense, we do not agree. Discord had also invaded his private circle. He had quarrelled with Lloyd, and also with Lamb. The insanity of Miss Lamb was a severe trial to her brother, who had also taken amiss the sonnets of Higginbottom, and who surrendered himself, in Coleridge's words, to an "unnatural indifference," sending no answer to a number of hearty letters. "I have a friend," wrote Lamb at that time, "a kinder friend has no man; like an ingrate I left my friend abruptly, left him to muse on the old familiar faces." It was then that Coleridge let slip the following words: "Poor Lamb! if he wants *any* knowledge, he may apply to me." At all events, such words were treacherously reported to Lamb. "Whispering tongues can poison truth," is the significant line penned two years later in the second part of "Christabel." Lamb became seriously angry, and sent Coleridge in irony a list of "theological questions"; for instance: "Whether God loves a lying angel better than a true man? Whether the higher order of the Seraphim illuminati ever sneer? Whether pure intelligences can love, or whether they can love anything besides pure intelligence?" The best remedy for all these unpleasantnesses was a temporary separation.



The reason that chiefly influenced Coleridge to leave was the fact that the Wordsworths had notice to quit their house. Accordingly they left on the 3rd July, and what was Stowey without them! On the other hand, once on the wing, it was a furtherance to the whole plan for them to decide to go with him.

At the same time, the pain of departure was great; the beauty of the place, Poole, his wife and children. He delayed his move for months, and looked back with longing when on the journey. Accompanied by the Wordsworths, he took the Hamburg packet from Yarmouth on the 16th September, 1798. Sorrowfully he watched the receding shores of England till they vanished. Did he realise the fact that he was also bidding adieu to his youthful muse? Such a beautiful and productive time as that spent in Stowey never recurred.

## CHAPTER V.

SEPTEMBER 1798 TO APRIL 1800.

“ O ! framed for calmer times and nobler hearts !  
 O ! studious poet, eloquent for truth !  
 Philosopher ! contemning wealth and death,  
 Yet docile, childlike, full of life and love ! ”

—*A tombless Epitaph.*

Voyage—Hamburg—Klopstock—Ratzeburg—Lessing’s Works—Remarks on Shakespeare—Göttingen—Carlyon—The two Parrys—Christian Heyne—Blumenbach—Study of Kant—The Hartz Mountains—Return to Göttingen—Degraded state of Germany—The Brocken—Return to England—Writes for *Morning Post*—Becomes a Tory—Improvises Pitt’s Speech—Effect of his Articles—Editor offers Partnership—Translates Wallenstein and Piccolomini—Much Abused—Leaves London—The Lakes.

COLERIDGE, now independent in mind, and twenty-six years of age, entered Germany, a modest student ; far more tractable than he had been in Cambridge. He burned with the desire to become acquainted with German literature and German writers. This was at that time no unprecedented desire. The brilliant concourse of the muses at Weimar had already attracted, between 1780–89, a visit from William Taylor of Norwich, who, by his translation of “ Iphigenia,” had made his countrymen acquainted with the sound of Goethe’s verse. Between 1790–99 he was followed by Monk Lewis—as

he was called—the amiable collector of ghost stories for the benefit of his sensation-loving countrymen, which he drew from German romances, from folk-lore, and from Herder's well-known "Volkslieder." But Coleridge took a different view. He did not throw himself into the poetical coterie on the Ilm, but, as far as possible, sought acquaintance with the general mass of the German people; moving freely among both the upper and lower social strata of Lower Saxony, with whom, as a subject of the Hanoverian dynasty, he felt most sympathy. He wanted to obtain knowledge of the inner life of the people. It was more important to him to get cuttings from the roots than to fill his pockets with the fruit. He did not travel about like a literary journeyman, but rather with the childlike and universal interest of a poet of the Romantic school.

Even on the passage he observed his fellow-passengers, and described them in letters to the Wedgwoods ("Satyrane's Letters") with all the realistic humour of Smollett; a little German tailor with wife—a sly Prussian—a half-anglicised Hanoverian, and so forth. In those days of slow and comfortless travelling, fellow-travellers became much more intimate than now. Coleridge drank, and sang, and danced with them on deck, while below in the cabin the horrors of sea-sickness prevailed. When well out at sea this author of the "Ancient Mariner" gazed upon the ocean as if he had never seen it before, and was surprised at the agreeable impression produced by "one single, solitary, wild duck" upon the great

expanse. Sailing up the Elbe he was equally fascinated by the huts of the peasants and fishermen as by the "summer-houses and Chinese show work" which announced the vicinity of Hamburg. And when landed in the great city itself (20th September, 1798), he never wearied of wandering through the unpaved, muddy streets, noting the different costumes of the Danish, Hanoverian, and Hamburg women, staring in at the shop windows, always thinking of Hogarth, "as happy as a child." A letter of introduction opened the house of Klopstock's brother to him, who made him acquainted with the deaf Professor Edeling, known for his exuberance of anecdote. Two things attracted him; intercourse with authors, and the French theatre. But of what avail was either without the language? This was the indispensable key to all foreign culture, and this he determined to obtain. Klopstock recommended a quiet place called Ratzeburg, where he could pursue his studies, and gave him a letter to the Amtmann. At the end of three days Coleridge drove there, and fancied the little town, with its brown-tiled roofs, its lake, and dark woods. The Amtmann sent him to the Pastor, a kind old man, who assigned him a room in his house. And here, in the midst of sweet nature and natural fellow-creatures, he determined to remain.

A few days later he returned to Hamburg, in order to take leave of the Wordsworths. On this occasion both the English poets were introduced to the author of the "Messiah." This only strengthened Coleridge's deter-

mination to conquer the German language, for with all his ardour for translating Klopstock's odes, he found communication with the author difficult, even with the help of Latin. Wordsworth spoke French. With some coolness the two poets of the Romantic school confronted the old master of Teutonic classicality. They were for freedom in poetic forms, he was for restraint. Coleridge asked about the earlier German poets, but Klopstock had hardly read one. The Englishman was more Germanic in feeling than the very leader of the Teutonic bards. Wordsworth also found the old gentleman—seventy-four years of age, and in a powdered wig, “the venerable father of German poetry,”—strangely behind the time. In vain did he question him whether he knew Gray, who in English literature took a position somewhat akin to that of Klopstock. The two young poets left the room with peculiar feelings. They had seen a very worthy Christian, and kindly old man, “with legs enormously swollen, and without upper teeth”; but they visited no second German poet.

Wordsworth, who cared only for the quiet and reverent enjoyment of nature, retired to Goslar in the Hartz, where his slight knowledge of German, his dislike to tobacco-smoke, his own reserved manners, and his attention to his sister, who was always with him, entailed even greater unsociability than he liked. It was different with Coleridge, to whom the same expression that he coined on a later occasion for Shakespeare, “the myriad-minded,” may be applied.

He was delighted with the "feminine grandeur" of the landscape; enjoyed the picturesque twilight colours of the North German evening sky over the broad lake, which in winter presented a brilliant field of ice covered with skaters. He threw himself also, as the Germans say, "with both feet" into social intercourse; took his meals with his excellent host, the pastor; followed him every morning from cellar to garret, through field and garden; learned *vivâ voce* the word for every object, like a child. He associated with the Amtmann, with the Amtmann's secretary, and with the Amtmann's secretary's wife. He invited people into his room, even with the inevitable pipe, till the smoke almost put out the candles. He played and chattered with the children, took part in the Christmas festivities, observed with emotion how the young ones surprised their parents with little presents, and remembered to his latest years the "Knecht Ruprecht," with his white sheet, his top boots, and enormous flaxen wig. He read advertisements, jest-books, and all the little literature of the day. The consequence was, that though never acquiring a perfect pronounciation, for which he was perhaps too old, he talked German with ease, and could interpret the most difficult passages. Not content with this practical result, he sought to go further, and to appreciate the beauty and appropriateness of the language. He enfranchised himself from the prejudice which the English entertained against "the harsh sounds" of German—a prejudice directed against most languages

at first. He studied the spirit of the tongue, appreciated its rich combinations, and placed it, in point of aptness, on a level with Greek ; in short, he penetrated to the very core of the language, such as it has become by the development of the Romantic school.

The same feeling dominated his choice in reading ; he wrote to his wife, at the beginning of November, "Lessing's works are at present the chief object of my admiration ;" and in Lessing's works, it may be acknowledged, are to be found the chief germs of modern German poetry.

He had first made acquaintance with Lessing, as a writer, in 1796, on theological ground, and after reading his "*Fragmente eines Ungenannten*," called him "the most formidable of infidels." Otherwise he knew no more of him than that he was "a German writer of eminence." Then, in the house of Klopstock's brother, he had seen a portrait of Lessing, which attracted him much. It struck him as a physiognomy "of quick and voluptuous feelings, of active fancy, acute in the questions of the ideal world." With this picture of the man fresh before his eyes, he threw himself into his works, and especially into his "*Dramaturgie*." It contributed actual examples to his platonic ideas of unity in variety, in the construction of a work of art. It opened to his declining imagination a new and appropriate field of activity—that of reasoning on the Beautiful, instead of creating it. It helped him to sounder views on the criticism of English art.

Steadily as the English nation had cultivated æsthetics—well described, it may be added, by Robert Zimmerman—they had not essentially departed from the pseudo-classic standard. The English philosophers looked upon taste in art, partly as the immediate judgment of the senses, partly as an inward sense; and proceeded accordingly to analyse art from a sensual point of view, rather than to search for the laws which govern æsthetic creation and enjoyment. Axioms, founded on experience, which the Greeks had developed for their own special circumstances—such as the Aristotelian unity of place and time in the drama—were, after the French example, adopted as everlasting rules. On the other hand, principles of universal validity, such as unity of treatment and character, received such a fantastic interpretation as to be virtually useless. Every stroke, every verse, every expression was considered, not in relation to the whole, but only according to its own individual beauty. The shortsightedness of this proceeding became most manifest when applied to Shakespeare. Everybody could find out his faults. If one of his personages, from impatience or absence of mind, contradicts himself, Shakespeare is accused of carelessness. If he lets simple people talk simply, common people commonly, he is called trivial. At the same time, after the appearance of Young's letters to Richardson, "On Original Composition," and after the time of Johnson and Garrick, a certain improvement became evident. People perceived that what was merely correct



did not please, while Shakespeare, in spite of all incorrectness, enchanted everybody. Exceptions to rules began to be allowed, especially in respect of unity of time and place, if greater edification or pathos was attained thereby. Still, the system of criticism remained, and Shakespeare continued to be thought a wild and incomprehensible genius. He was not understood as an artist, though worshipped as an idol. Johnson, his careful editor, reasoning on the scene where Hamlet finds the King praying, and yet does not kill him, fearing that taken at such a moment he might escape hell, calls the expression of his forbearance "savageness," and altogether too wicked in the mouth of a Christian. It did not strike him that this speech was in harmony with the character of the weak, whimsical Prince, who is glad of another excuse for delay. Garrick compared Shakespeare's plays—which he was the first to produce on the stage in their integrity—to the beauty of a Dutch picture of Peasants. Even in the critics of the decade 1780-89—Professor Richardson and H. Whitley—I can find no genuine appreciation of the great artist; they adored him on their knees, but only in order to abuse with greater freedom what they conceived to be his faults; his carelessness in conception of character, his ignorance of geography and history, his recklessness in the mixture of comedy and tragedy. It is true that towards the beginning of the nineteenth century, the appreciation of the Elizabethan poets rose in the same measure as the Romantic school at large;

but it had as yet produced only antiquarian disquisitions. The laws of beauty were as little defined as in Johnson's time. Coleridge, we know, when in Oxford, had placed Shakespeare's concrete personifications above Gray's abstract ones (Bio. Lit. cap. 1). At Stowey also he had penetrated his physiological conception of Hamlet's character, and yet even in 1798 he had expressed himself to Hazlitt quite in Johnson's manner; namely, that, as far as regarded art, Shakespeare was "a mere stripling."

What Coleridge had gained from Lessing he unreservedly owned. In the 'Biographia Literaria' he maintains "that it was Lessing who first proved to all thinking men, even to Shakespeare's own countrymen, the true nature of his apparent irregularities." Also, that, not only in truth of nature but even in the principles of art, he had come far closer to Aristotle than either Corneille or Racine, with all their high-sounding regularity. He must have said as much to Wordsworth as early as the beginning of 1800. Otherwise, Wordsworth, with his ignorance of Lessing, could not have stated in that year, in the preface of his 'Lyrical Ballads,' that the Germans had preceded the English in proving that Shakespeare was not only a wild genius, but a great artist. Lessing had arrived at that conclusion by maintaining, in opposition to the classicists, that form is always in reference to fundamental plan, variety to unity. For Coleridge, and through him for his countrymen, this admission was a step in advance, if not in poetic taste, yet in the foundations of taste.

Coleridge was so absorbed in his new master that he determined to write his life, partly to repay many a financial help on the part of the Wedgwoods, and partly "to convey under a better name than my own ever will be, opinions which I deem of the highest importance." But for this object Ratzeburg offered him no materials. He removed therefore, by the end of January 1799, to the flourishing university of Göttingen, and studied with little interruption for five months. Bürger, the author of "Leonore," who had died there five years before, and Lichtenberg, the half-English humourist, and intelligent expositor of Hogarth, who died that very February, are never alluded to by him. On the other hand, he read every pamphlet of Lessing's, bought several of them, and made extracts from others. He made acquaintance also with two men who had known Lessing when librarian of Wolfenbüttel, in order to obtain unpublished materials. And he himself took a trip thither for the purpose of research. At one time he even proposed to translate Lessing's collective works into English, an idea at which his friends laughed rather incredulously. In short, Lessing played the same part with him as to the theory of poetry, as Bowles had done in its practice, that of giving the first kindling spark.

And as with Bowles, so also with Lessing, traces of his influence are clearly to be seen. The occasion was given by the arrival of some Englishmen in Göttingen. They consisted of Clement Carlyon, a young medical man from Cambridge, who had obtained a travelling

scholarship, and who in his old age wrote his reminiscences ; and of Charles Parry, who held dissertations in Göttingen in 1799 upon the moral forces of the ancient religions, and who was later known as a physiologist, poet, and defender of the corn laws ; also Parry's brother, Frederick. These gentlemen soon became friends with Coleridge ; he read their verses, spouted his own to them, and composed a criticism on his own drama, "Osorio." The unmerciful way in which Coleridge pulls his own work to pieces, is as significant of his own modest thirst for knowledge, as of his respect for Lessing, to whom he looked up for the rest of his life as a model of acute, spirited, sometimes stinging, but always argumentative and honourable criticism.

He did not stop with Lessing. That would neither have suited his own many-sidedness nor the comprehensive modes of research which prevailed in Göttingen. The reigning professor there was Christian Heyne, the admirer of Ossian and the eulogist of Winkelmann. He had shown by examples from Homer that a poet is not to be judged only by himself, but by all the conditions preceding him ; by his language and religion, and by the literary and political history of his race. Tieck, and both the Schlegels—the champions of the German Romantic school—were scholars of Heyne. Coleridge was already acquainted with his edition of Virgil, which had made its way to Stowey, and which, it is quite possible, had helped to attract this insatiable student to Göttingen. At this time Christian Heyne

was lecturing on the learning, constitution, religion and domestic conditions of the Greeks ; "by way of introduction to the comprehension of their writers." Coleridge went to him after his matriculation, which is dated 16th February, 1799, in order to obtain an order for the library, and forthwith commenced a regular study of philology from the earliest time down to that of Lessing. At the same time he carried on the study of early English literature (by Warton), and of the poets of different nations ; if Heyne was not always at hand to sign the guarantee, his son-in-law Reuss, who lectured on general literature, did it for him. This was persistent and regular work, entirely self-imposed ; Professor Tychsen, Heyne's favourite scholar, a dry, but far-reaching interpreter of Hebrew poetry, helped him to master Gothic philology and the translation of the Bible. No wonder that such a busy builder of schemes should have contemplated an exhaustive account of German *belles lettres* in two quarto volumes. It was not long before his boldest dreams in that direction were worked out in the very place by Gervinus and the brothers Grimm.

But the limits of German literature were too confined for him. He attended Blumenbach's lectures on Zoology, in which the lecturer maintained the historical methods of comparative anatomy, and so far upheld the affinity between the whole animal creation as to feel it necessary at the same time to warn his hearers against the error of placing man and brute in the same category. He also obtained the lectures of Eichhorn the

theologian, who applied the test of philological criticism to the Scriptures; rejecting what he considered popular tradition, or intentional allegory, and filling his hearers with rationalistic doubts as to all literal interpretation. But his most important studies were in the regions of philosophy.

The order of the day in Göttingen, as in every German university, was the study of Kant. One of the youngest, most cultivated and attractive of the professors—Bouterweck—was at this time holding a series of lectures on Logic and *Æsthetics* on the Kant lines, which were enormously attended. Two other doctors (of philosophy) also held forth upon the “*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*” and the “*Kritik der Urtheilskraft*” (the “*Critique of Pure Reason*” and the “*Critique of the Faculty of Judgment*”), the one five, the other four hours a week—sufficient proofs of the popularity of the new dogma. The old metaphysical ideas as to the knowledge of things was now replaced by a critical examination of the human understanding. These ethics were founded anew upon the ideas set apart, in almost too lofty isolation from human interest, of duty and good-will. The domain of the supernatural—God, Freedom, and Immortality—at the point where it ceases to be intelligible, was considered necessary for the completion of the higher being of man. Finally, between the laws of nature and those of morality, a common ground was admitted where they meet in harmony; the kingdom, namely, of the Fitting and the

Beautiful. For a man of philosophical tendencies, it was absolutely impossible to escape from so famous and revolutionary a system. Coleridge had already heard of it in Cambridge. He at that time firmly resolved to study the "great metaphysician" in his own country. The very designation shows how little he then understood him; for Kant was under the impression that he had given the finishing-stroke to all metaphysics. What means of enlightening him existed in England at that time? Two German bookworms, Nitsch and Wellich, had published certain dry extracts (1796-1798), which savoured more of scissors and paste than of any real comprehension. No verbal help, were it only to explain the difficult vocabulary of the unwieldy philosopher, was to be had. The more earnestly did he take advantage of the present opportunity. A young Göttingen lady was utterly astonished at the knowledge he displayed of these books "with seven seals." Was not she a German, and she did not understand them! Readily did he enter a path of thought which he himself had already inwardly almost discovered, and from which he was destined never again to extricate himself.

The side from which he first approached Kant was, as it appears, that of art criticism. This was intelligible, for this was the subject on which he had of late principally occupied himself. The view he took of the Sublime and Beautiful (1799) shows itself, on closer examination, to partake of the principles of Kant. He

knew the sensual opinions which his countrymen had pronounced on them, but endeavoured to supersede them by rational and "critical" deductions. More especially did he place himself in opposition to Burke, who had endeavoured to identify the Beautiful with the agreeable, and the Sublime with terror and pain (1757). Coleridge did not believe the Sublime to be connected with terror, but rather with beauty; and that it operated not on the powers of the body, but on those of the soul, by "bringing about a suspension of the power of comparison." Evidently the "Kritik der Urtheilskraft" was in his mind. Kant here also places the Sublime and the Beautiful together. He describes the pleasure we take in both, ascribing it to no sensual charm, but to the sense of the purpose involved, which in the Sublime appertains to the nature of quantity, and in the Beautiful to that of quality.

But Coleridge did not forget society in work. He visited in the Blumenbach house; argued sometimes with Eichhorn; but found the professors upon the whole "so high learned, and so wholly engaged in their academical occupations," that nothing was to be done with them. In truth, it is delightful to see in Blumenbach's letters to Sommering how almost exclusively Blumenbach interests himself in bones; with what "childlike, extravagant joy" he rejoiced over a six-fingered hand, which had been given him; with what tender care he provided for a three-legged goat which was fed in his court-yard.



All the more did Coleridge associate with the students. He wrote in their albums ; he took part in their processions ; he went to their beer-houses, and joined with heart and voice in the song, "Ein freies Leben führen wir." He attended no church, but he preached in his own way upon Pitt, whose diplomatic judgment he greatly condemned ; upon Giordano Bruno, whose doctrine of the world's soul quite sorted with his platonick stock in hand ; and upon Spinoza, whose system he now ingenuously enough summed up as "Everything has a life of its own, and we are all one life." It was a time of serious work, and of exuberant spirits.

In order to see something more of the German people, and of their mountain scenery, he took a trip for the Whitsun week—commencing on the 11th May—to the Hartz Mountains, accompanied by his English friends and one of Blumenbach's sons. They journeyed first by Andreasberg to the Brocken, and then took a long round by Elbingerode, Blankenberg, Harzburg, and Goslar—all of which the Wordsworths had visited in the spring—and back to Göttingen. He wore a short jacket of common stuff. He lived for days upon potatoes and pancakes, and slept at night upon straw in village inns which had nothing better ; for his aim was to know all classes and all circumstances. In Hessendreich he saw how the beer was made, which was bad in proportion as the peasants were poor, and the times disturbed. At Rudolphhausen he went through the great dairy-farms which are at the disposal of the superintendent of the

State roads, and gathered from their admirable arrangement that the gentry of the country do contribute to the improvement of agriculture. He remarked how hard the people laboured in the fields, and yet how gaily they danced on holidays, and shot at the stuffed pigeon. When in Roman Catholic parts, he was equally as interested in the village children running about, clad in little more than ragged shirts and an amulet; healthy and fat, as in the fine picture of the Twelve Apostles by Lucas Cranach which hung in the cathedral of Goslar, next an altar to the ancient heathenish idol Kroto. At the frontier, on an isolated part of Hesse Cassel, he found a great slab inscribed "*Pays neutre*," as a precaution in case of French invasion, and could not thank God enough for having given him an island for his fatherland.

His impressions of outer nature were pleasant—fertile plains and rocky hills. The woods struck him as finer, the hills more diversified, the peasant houses far more interesting, and extreme misery rarer than in England. At the same time, the scenery lacked the park-like character of his own land—the water, the luxuriant verdure, the hedges, the single cottages, and the gentlemen's seats. All this is preserved in the letters he wrote home (printed in the *New Monthly Magazine*, vol. 45), and which are expressed with a vivacity which brings before us the very life he witnessed. He thoroughly learned the character of Germany.

All this enlightened him much on the subject of

German poetry. During these months, or soon after, he translated a number of poems into English. These are simply unpretending exercises. Coleridge did not willingly rush into print, except for purposes of profit or friendship; doing so at that time, partly in the *Morning Post* (after August 1779), partly in the "Annual Anthology," founded by Southey and Cottle in 1800, after the pattern of the German "Musen Almanach," partly also—though not till 1817—in the "Sibylline Leaves." This Coleridge called "emptying my desk," and sometimes even omitted to state where such emptyings were published. And even these chippings contribute to the history of his development; they show the depth and abundance of his sympathies; they are precursors of his classical translation of *Wallenstein*.

Above all, though not intimately acquainted with the writers of the German Romantic school, he shared with them the love of mediæval and popular subjects. He translated a passage from the earliest German epic poem—Otfried's "Evangelienbuch"—where the Virgin is nursing the new-born Saviour. Its chief charm in his eyes was doubtless that combination of warm and naïve human feeling with the sense of the Supernatural which he himself had often invoked. This fragment is directly connected with the night scene in "Christabel." Soon it supplied him with a subject, under the title of the "Christmas Carol." He applied the idea to his own wife and to the little Berkeley—thought he saw her kissing the child, "something more than babe—a floating

presence of its darling father." What in "Christabel" was conceived in a fairy sense, is here childlike. In a similar way he indulges with peculiar zest, in his "Mutual Passion," in an imitation of the old-fashioned rhymes which introduce "Minnesang's Frühling"; also in "A Westphalian Song," which he caught from the lips of a peasant. But his unconscious agreement and sympathy with the German Romantic school is most seen at the beginning of his poem to his wife, taken from the old song, "Wenn ich ein Vöglein wär," which appeared in the collection called "Des Knaben Wunderhorn." The title of the poem is, "Something childish, but very natural."

As regards the modern Lyrical school, he made a peculiar selection, adhering principally to the pathos of Klopstock. He began a "Mahomet" in hexameters, modelled apparently from the "Messiah," as evident from the first lines: "Utter the song, O my soul! the flight and return of Mahomet." From Stolberg's poems he translated "Tell's Birth-place," also "das Lied eines deutschen Knaben," — British Stripling's War-song (as Coleridge calls it), and the "Hymn to the Earth"; the two last also in stiff hexameters, as Southey used to turn them out, till at last it became evident that the English language, with its many monosyllabic words, was more unsuited for them even than the German. He paraphrased also the Klopstock-like ode, "Chamouni before Sunrise," by the same Frederica Brun whose "Sieben Hügel" is said to have given Wordsworth the idea for "We are Seven." Cole-

ridge went very freely to work, introducing many a reminiscence of his Hartz journey. Next, after the school of Klopstock he was most influenced, as we know, by Lessing, and that in the line of light lyrical comedy. Till this time Coleridge's aim at humour had consisted in grotesque "*diablerie*," rhetorical caricature, and pleasing description with broad canvas and brush. The epigram, with its delicate point, and sober brevity, only occurs in some passages in the *Watchman*; and as these, on account of their personalities, had brought him much annoyance — having robbed him, it was said, of an inheritance from a grandmother — he forswore their further use. At this time, however, he took up the epigram again, and wrote a number of apothegms, which on nearer examination may almost all be traced to Lessing, as he himself admitted to Cottle. From the same source proceeded the Anacreontic trifle, "Names," while his poem against the French, "From an old German Poet," was prompted by Wernicke, a precursor of Lessing's. He neglected the more modern writers. He retained a liking for Goethe's lyrics, but nothing more. From Schiller, once his idol, he only translated the distiches on hexameters and pentameters, and the "Visit of the Gods." Finally, he took a fancy to the description, in Catullian hendecasyllables by Matthison, of an ancient Milesian temple, placed high above the sea, and surrounded with myrtle groves; and translated it in the same metre. It was evident that he preferred to confine himself to those writers on whom time had

already passed its approving sentence. He was more anxious to obtain correct judgment, than to enter into any creative rivalry. Theory was preferred to practice.

Such original poetry as he wrote in Germany is small in amount and monotonous in kind, being simply the expression of longing for wife, child and country. Here and there beautiful thoughts appear, as, for instance, "Lines composed in a Concert Room." New views also occurred to him, as in "Lines written in the Album at Ellingerode," a poetical description, namely, of the Brocken, of the far "surging woodland" as seen from the summit; of the sunny beds of moss under the fir-trees, and of "an old romantic goat, his beard slow waving." But the parts no longer fitted together. Coleridge felt himself alone and out of his element, and saw no way but to return to England, where his little Berkeley had meanwhile died (10th February, 1799), and where the lonely mother needed comfort.

The 24th June was fixed for his departure from Göttingen. He celebrated his leave-taking by spending the evening with Professor Blumenbach, and then returned by the Brocken to Blankenberg and Wolfenbüttel. By the 30th June he was in Brunswick; visited the professors there, inspected the Mineralogical Museum, and listened to the most violent attacks upon Kant. "What does he mean," said Professor Bernard von Zimmermann—the aged naturalist, traveller, and Frenchman-hater,— "by saying first that the existence of God cannot possibly be proved, and then that this impossibility is the best

proof of His existence?" But Coleridge was thoroughly home-sick, and had no longer any interest in Kant. Accordingly, by the 20th August his longing was assuaged. He had been away only ten months, and had learned more in those months than in all the four years at Cambridge; nor did he ever omit to acknowledge his obligations to Blumenbach and Eichhorn. He returned to his family and to his benefactors with a conscience at ease. In order to pursue his studies he had purchased and brought with him £30 worth of "metaphysical books." Not only had he arrived at new thoughts on philosophical subjects, but also on political questions. He had seen the Holy Roman Empire of Germany sunk in the lowest degradation, though on the eve of its liberation; smitten by France, and "cursed with a base and hateful brood of nobles and princelings. A fine people, but enslaved and helpless; taxes high, justice venial, and public opinion despised." In Göttingen he had often seriously doubted whether mankind were really advancing in wisdom and goodness, or whether they only revolved in a circle. The more glorious—seen then from a distance, and after the brilliant victory of Aboukir—did his own once despised England appear to him. From the heights of the Brocken he had exclaimed:

"Thou Queen! thou delegated Deity of earth!  
O dear, dear England! how my longing eye,  
Turned westward, shaping in the steady clouds,  
Thy sands and high white cliffs."

But a year before he had condemned the tyrannical

corrupt island to destruction. Now he could say with Wordsworth, "We have learnt England's value." He returned therefore to his native land a confirmed patriot, though not a blind one. He had become, in an English acceptation, a tolerably moderate Conservative; and circumstances were so ordered that this result of his German journey came first to light in his literary work.

Coleridge had now to consider how best to turn his newly-acquired knowledge to account. He went for a short time to Stowey, and then with his wife and Southey to his relations at Ottery, where the pleasure of reunion obliterated for a time all former disagreements. On the 27th November, 1799, he took his way by Bristol to London, and appeared again in the Editor's room of the *Morning Post*, no longer an occasional, but a permanent contributor. That paper was growing in importance, being useful, though with a certain latitude, to the Government. The editor, Stuart, offered favourable terms, and Coleridge even secured the explicit concession of *carte blanche* in political subjects. Here, for several months, he steered his way with leading articles and poetry, which may be described as cautious preparations for joining the Tories.

In the poems which he wrote on these occasions he resumed his usual character of burlesque satire in the ode form; but the matter had become tame. How passionately, in his "Devil's Thoughts," had he scourged "the great minister" Pitt, and the hypocrisy of the



upper classes! Now, in a pretended letter from "Talleyrand to Lord Grenville," he contented himself, and again in doggerel verse, with ridiculing the style of both ministers. With what fiery language had he pleaded in his "France" for the liberty of Switzerland! Now, in his "Ode to Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire," he cries it up as something extraordinary that this noble lady should have honoured the deed of Tell with a stanza. With this change, the power of his style departed; his letters teem with diffuse rhetoric, and his odes with barren repetitions. The political poetry of Coleridge had reached its close.

A similar difference may be remarked in his leading articles (printed in the "Essays on His Own Times") as compared with the burning outpourings in the *Watchman*. At that time he preached the rights of man; now, on the other hand, he was all in favour of the sacredness of vested rights, and therefore of the dominant position of the nobility ("that leprous spot," 1794) and of the Court. Then he had compared the French Revolution with the beginning of the great Rebellion; now he prophesies an analogous result, namely, the return of the Bourbons. He gives a characteristic sketch of Pitt, and describes him as a statesman; one made, not grown; not as a genius, with feeling and imagination, but of sober talent; not a deep thinker, like Burke, but a superficial financier. But the more violently he attacks Burke personally, the more temperately does he reason on the continuation of the

war with France. We learn also through a chance incident that he was even ready to defend the policy of the Government. On the evening of the seventeenth of February, he attended the House of Commons as a reporter; Pitt spoke as fluently as ever for an hour and longer—an endless torrent of words. Coleridge fell asleep; but finding on his return that Stuart was particularly anxious to know what Pitt had said, he forthwith improvised a supposed speech. The zeal with which he defended the war cannot be all invention. “They are telling us that ministers disregard peace, that they are prodigal of blood, insensible to the miseries, and enemies to the liberties of mankind; that personal ambition is their motive; that we have squandered two hundred millions. Sir, will men be governed by mere words, without application? This country, sir, will not! It knows that to this war it owes its prosperity, its constitution, whatever is fair or useful in public or domestic life, the majesty of its laws, the freedom of its worship, and the sacredness of our firesides” (Gillman p. 211). The trick was of course found out, but it deceived many. Reporting was not the careful art it has become since. Burke, then not long dead, seemed to revive in Coleridge. Could the author of “Fire, Famine, and Slaughter” contradict himself more flatly? The style of his reasoning was also altered. Not flaming enthusiasm but logical refinement is now his weapon. He indulges in hair-breadth distinctions; for example, as between Napoleon the

restorer of order, and Napoleon the usurper. He uses no stock term without expounding its meaning. Hence arose his definition of "a Jacobin," in which his aversion for "the levellers" was enunciated with mathematical precision. He endeavoured to replace by system the inward power which he had lost. The regulation of policy by principle, which he had always most admired in Burke, he now sought to carry to the highest extreme of philosophical thoroughness, as a sort of defence for his own new-born toryism.

These articles excited great attention ; partly because they agreed with the great change in public opinion, partly on account of their individual, thoughtful, and easy style. Their effect outlived the peace of Amiens (March 1802), and contributed—according to the evidence of Fox—to the resumption of the war with Napoleon ; this time with the almost unanimous ardour of the nation. The particular number of the paper which contained the character of Pitt was for weeks enquired for. Numerous enquiries were made by letter as to who the gifted reporter of Pitt's speech might be ; the subscribers also increased. Stuart was proud of his contributor, and treated him liberally. He hired a room for him—21 Buckingham Street, Strand—in order to facilitate his access to the House ; provided for all his personal needs, so that he should have no thought but for his public employment ; and would have taken him into partnership, a position worth about £2000 a year, if he could have bound himself to work regularly

from three to four hours a day. But Coleridge had no power over his pen. He would hold forth to Stuart upon the current incidents of the day in the finest speeches imaginable, but never wrote them down. His thoughts revolved like visions in his brain, rich, large brilliant, and then vanished, leaving only nervous exhaustion behind. He was entirely a man of moods. He despised Stuart's love of business ; characterised him as knowing many men but with little knowledge of Man ; and met his advantageous offer with the reply that he would not give up a life in the country, and the lazy readings of old folios, for twice £2000 a year ; adding, in a letter to Poole, that a larger income than £350 was only "a real evil." The same careless surrender to his own genius which winged his pen in hours of inspiration, made him incapable of regular work, and must greatly have tried the patience of his wife, who at that time was in London on a visit. His own words best describe his need for this fitful form of inspiration : "Life were so flat a thing without enthusiasm, that if for a moment it leaves me, I have, with all my thoughts, that same kind of feeling as when the pleasant effects of a dose of opium goes off" (Cottle, Jan. 1800). As early therefore as March 1800, he quitted Stuart, and went to his easily reconciled old friend Lamb ; and in April he broke off all regular work for the paper, and only sent occasional contributions, till the Peace of 1802 brought the *Morning Post* to an end.

But if his political activity was thus for the time exhausted, Coleridge was now to accomplish the chief achievement, in a poetic sense, which he owed to his German journey; namely, the translation of "Wallenstein." He was far from being really indolent, only he liked to choose his own work. For six weeks—from the beginning of March—he sat with spasmodic industry, wrapped in an old dressing-gown, in which he looked like an astrologer, seeing no one but Lamb, till he finished both "Piccolomini" and "Wallenstein's Death"—a wonderful performance, both as to amount and execution. Whenever Coleridge produced anything important, it was always by fits and starts, as by a sudden ebullition of intoxication. The immediate cause of this work was accidental. For the sake of profit Schiller had allowed his MS. to be offered through his native publisher (Cotta), for the purpose of translation, to Bell, an English publisher, and this even before he had brought it into final order for publication (3rd September, 1798); the worldly success of Kotzebue's works having created a rage in London for the German drama. It is true Schiller had had just as favourable an offer from Miller, another publisher, for the copyright of translation of "Fiesco" and "Don Carlos"; but, as Miller made it a condition that the English translation should appear a fortnight before the German one, the untried Bell was preferred. This was done out of regard for Cotta—a fact which Schiller had soon cause to regret. Bell received a copy in November 1799, of which Schiller—September 30th—

had attested the authenticity. Then ensued a long interval of silence on the part of Bell, when suddenly, in September 1800, Schiller hears that a translation by one Mr. Coleridge—an entire stranger to him—published by a firm equally unknown to him—Messrs. Longman—had appeared in London: “Piccolomini,” namely, at the beginning of April, and “Wallenstein’s Death” in June: the original German being also published by Cotta in June. Schiller immediately wrote to Coleridge to know how he had obtained the MS. The answer was, that he had obtained it from the Messrs. Longman, with the author’s own attestation of authenticity; Longmans having purchased it—quite innocently—from Bell. The further solution was that Bell had been unable to pay the sum agreed on—£60—and two years elapsed before the author received it. Schiller’s correspondence with Cotta gives an account of the whole transaction.

The translation of German works was at that time a regular industry in London. Monk Lewis, Benjamin Thompson, Mrs. Inchbald, and Mrs. Plumptree, all now well-nigh forgotten, were the chief purveyors. They took up works, good or bad, just as the circulating libraries ordered; they diluted them, altered them, and spoiled them. Outside this clique, it is true, there was some earnest work, but seldom the needful ability. Of prose pieces none but the “Robbers” and “Götz von Berlichingen” had been so translated—the one by Mr. Fraser Tytler, known as Lord Woodhouselee—the other by Walter Scott—as to retain something of the racy

style of the originals ; but of poems, nothing at all. William Taylor's "Iphigenia" (1792) was powerful but wooden. The different forms in which "Leonore" appeared are old-fashioned and tame ; while "Don Carlos" was actually rendered in prose. While Coleridge was engaged on "Wallenstein," Holcroft tried his hand at "Hermann and Dorothea," but with an old-maidish nicety of style which contrasts with his known free and revolutionary opinions. Hermann dares not long to embrace his beloved's "Brust und Schultern," but only "that fine form"; the apothecary is, from a sense of propriety, not allowed his pipe ; and mine host of the Golden Lion is made much more polite to his guests. All these writers tampered with their originals, without, in the higher sense, nationalising them.

Coleridge was especially a faithful translator : but in order to prove this, we must not compare his copy with the current text. The version which Schiller had sent agrees with none of the numerous other versions. This is easily seen in the collated edition of his works, vol. 12. The wording, upon the whole, may be said to stand half-way between the author's first conception, and the alterations which he gradually added. At that time it is evident these had not occurred to him. Many of them agree with a copy which Schiller placed at the disposal of the German Court Theatre—abbreviations—paraphrases of the scene with the servants in prose—and more copious stage directions ; namely, in the astrological ceremonies, and in the camp ; also a few additions to the

text, intended for greater theatrical effect ; for instance, the incident of the bottle of wine which one of the servants steals in the scene of the banquet. The arrangement of the scenes, however, is the same as in a second stage edition (published by Maltzahn 1861). Schiller seems therefore to have composed the version intended for the English translation with great care, and also with a view to its representation. According to Freiligrath's account, who revived the subject in the English *Athenæum* in 1861,\* the author read through the copy forwarded to Bell, corrected the mistakes of the copyist, and in "Piccolomini" struck out one word. This was the copy translated by Coleridge, and with such fidelity, that, eclectic as it is, it could, if lost, be reconstructed from the English text. And not only did he give the sense of the words, but also their beauty and force. He preserved indeed the lofty splendour of the style. He allowed his blank verse no greater liberties than are found in the original, only that at the conclusion of the scenes the rhymes were abandoned, and that a trochee often replaces an iambus. Where he was unable to preserve the entire poetic form of the original—as in "Thecla's Song"—he states it openly in a note. The preamble in the "Camp" he entirely omitted ; the short lines puzzled him as much as the broad humour, and he

\* This account refers to the "Piccolomini" and to "Wallenstein's Tod." The preamble in "Wallenstein's Camp" was at that time not to be found. The copy of the "Piccolomini" has since then passed from the possession of Dr. Gillman of Highgate into that of Mr. Alex. W. Gillman, Chalmers Park, Hill Road, Croydon.



did not want to become prosaic. But his work, as far as it goes, does justice not only to Schiller's mind but to his imagination. He would never have caught his spirit so profoundly had he not visited Germany.

A number of verbal mistakes committed by Coleridge must not be made too much of. Some of them were only from absence of mind, as, for instance, where he says "here, Brother," instead of "Herr Bruder." Nor can an Englishman be much criticised for giving wrong meanings to foreign names, as "huge mountains" to "Riesengebirge," and "minstrels" (tambourine players) to "Taboriten." What is preserved is the spirit of the whole. Schiller had good cause to be satisfied with his translator, and was so in every sense, till a travelling Englishman directed his attention to "some ridiculous mistakes" ('Crabb Robinson's Journal'). Then for the first time he complained of the "schändlichsten Übersetzungsfehler" (the most shameful faults in the translation) in the "Piccolomini," an expression which must be ascribed to the nervous condition of the then sickening dramatist.

On the other hand, Coleridge did not bind himself slavishly to the original text at the cost of his own national and individual feeling. He wished not only to render "Wallenstein" conscientiously into English words, but to suit also the drama itself to its English form. He kept carefully in mind the manners of his own country, left out formal compliments, turned kisses into embraces, and embraces into shakes of the hand. He took his

countrymen's love of liberty also into account, adding many an expression of contempt for "those minions of Court favour, those Court harpies who dance to the tune of every minister." Pathetic tirades are sometimes moderated; explanatory paraphrases are often inserted; abstract expressions turned into concrete or, if possible, proverbial expressions; and ponderous sentences broken up into lively dialogue.

The most important innovation, however, occurs in the scene where the lovers for the first time speak out. In Schiller's version Max defends the reliance on the stars. In love as he is, he likes to fancy himself surrounded by divine influences. He complains, "They live no longer in the faith of reason;" and then Coleridge adds in his own person, with pathetic recollection of his own platonic landscape reveries:

"The fair humanities of old religion,  
The power, the beauty, and the majesty  
That had their haunts in dale or airy mountain,  
Or forest, by slow stream, or pebbly spring,  
Or chasms, or watery depths; all these have vanished."

One can understand the view taken by the English when they maintain that Coleridge's "Wallenstein" is superior to Schiller's. The wonder is why they occupied twenty years before arriving at this opinion. At first the work fell dead from the press, the translator himself setting the example of indifference. When he undertook the translation he promised the public, in his glowing enthusiasm, to write an essay on Schiller. But

even in the preface to the first part it is evident that he had much cooled ; and in the second part he actually began to criticise the play ; saying that Wallenstein, with his long speeches, could not be compared with Othello or Lear, but at most with Richard II. or Henry VI. In his letters of the time he regularly abuses the "dragged, dull, heavy play." Nor was his increasing hatred for Napoleon without influence in his disgust for the character of the hero who, with grand but dissembling words, aims at the highest power.

The public were not more favourable. The German drama, which had come into fashion with the revolutionary ideas, was now equally gone out of fashion with them. The *Anti-Jacobin Review* covered it alternately with ridicule and abuse. No idea of bringing "Wallenstein" on to the stage was entertained. The reviewers cried it down : Wallenstein's inordinate pride was "disgusting," his attempted treason "profligate"; the whole drama full of tediousness, extravagances, and absurdities ; the translation lame, devoid of harmony and elegance (*Monthly Review* and *British Critic*). To such lengths can the contact of poetry with politics lead ! It is significant of the standard of opinion at that time that Coleridge himself protested against the verdict of the *Monthly Review*, which called him "by far the most rational partisan of the German theatre." "The mere circumstance," he wrote, "of translating a manuscript play is not even evidence that I admired that one play, much less that I am a general admirer

of plays in that language." This work, like almost every one published by him, was for long only a failure ; and after a few years was treated by the publisher as waste paper, in spite of Coleridge's advice to him to keep the copies till the fever of anti-Jacobinism should have passed away. Few had poetry and independence enough to appreciate the piece. Southey preferred it to all Schiller's other works ; Wordsworth and Campbell both borrowed from it. Walter Scott took many a motive from it ; for instance, the astrological accessories in *Kenilworth*. This circle of poets kept the drama in mind, and after the fall of Napoleon helped to make it known. Walter Scott was also the first, as far as I see, who placed the translation before the original. The quotations which he introduced in his novels contributed to draw the attention of the public to the work. The *London Magazine* declared it, in 1824, to be the only sufferable translation from the German. "If 'Wallenstein' had been written in English," said *Blackwood's Magazine* in 1823, "it might have done wonders ; but we were at that depraved time too proud to be kindled by a foreign torch." Nowadays Coleridge is the acknowledged authority for "Wallenstein" in England, as Schlegel and Tieck are for Shakespeare in Germany.

By the end of April 1800, having finished "Wallenstein," Coleridge felt himself no longer at home in London. The meadows were green, he was again sick of town life, and having brought books with him from Germany, desired to turn his German studies to account. In the

first days of May we find him at Grasmere, on a visit to his "god, Wordsworth," as Lamb, who remained behind, jealously said. He contemplated the enchanting beauty of the Lake district. How infinitely did this nature surpass that at Stowey! and the delightful society of Wordsworth and his sister to boot! Coleridge was all for remaining there. He returned once more to Bristol and Stowey in order to convince himself that his former tenancy was impossible; Poole moreover, was planning a visit to the Continent. On the same occasion he paid a visit to Liverpool, where he had become acquainted with Roscoe, the banker, and historian of Lorenzo de' Medici. Then he packed up his worldly goods, and with wife and child followed Wordsworth to the Lakes.

Nearly two years of fruitful work lay behind him. This was to be continued, nay, increased, in the new neighbourhood. Country air was to strengthen his health, and family life to afford a cheerful stimulus for poetic creation. Unhappily, the very reverse took place just at the time and place from which he had expected the most.

## CHAPTER VI.

AT THE LAKES. ILL AND RESTLESS. SUMMER OF 1800  
TO AUTUMN 1810.

“Reality’s dark dream.”—*Dejection*.

Greta Hall—Decline of Poetic Inspiration—Mrs. Robinson—Domestic Alienation—Southey at Greta—“Ode to Dejection”—Metaphysics—London—Stoddart—Basil Montague—Humphrey Davy—Wales and Devonshire with Thos. Wedgwood—Ill—Liverpool—Malta—Sir Alex. Ball—Becomes his Secretary—Naples—Rome—Proscribed by Napoleon—Pope Pius VII.—Leaves Rome in Disguise—Genoa—Smuggled on Board Ship—Returns to England—Bristol—De Quincey—Lecturing in London—*The Friend*—“Christopher North”—Goethe’s “Faust”—Immoderate use of Opium—Unhappy Family Relations—Leaves Keswick, never to return.

AT the Lakes all seemed at first to fulfil his hopes. A commodious house was found, an easy day’s stroll from the Wordsworths’, and this remained the home of his family as long as he lived. It was called Greta Hall, and is now a girls’ school, standing at the west end of the little town of Keswick, upon a wooded hill, surrounded by the Greta, which discharges the Lake of Keswick into that of Bassenthwaite. The breadth of water is greater here than at Grasmere, the circle of hills more imposing, the valleys richer; while the conveniences of a town were closer at hand. The house was new-built and roomy; properly speaking,

two houses under one roof, the smaller of which was inhabited by Mr. Jackson, the proprietor. This was another advantage, for Mr. Jackson conceived a hearty friendship for his tenants. He had raised himself from the condition of a common carrier to that of a wealthy man; lived frugally, but the more liberally towards others; loved books and honoured their authors. He charged Coleridge half the rent he would ordinarily have demanded. He had a good old housekeeper, Mrs. Wilson, who took every care of Mrs. Coleridge and of little Hartley, and of the still smaller Derwent (born September 14, 1800). Mr. Jackson even stood godfather for Hartley, both children being baptized in 1802, and remembered him in his will—1809. Under these circumstances Coleridge could sit undisturbed in his study—his own books, and as many as he pleased from Jackson's library, around him—an old organ next him, an enchanting view before him, mountains and clouds so meeting "as if Heaven and Earth were for ever talking to each other" (Cottle). A few days after his arrival, he wrote to Mr. Sam Purkis, the landscape painter, at Brentford, describing his delightful surroundings. The original letter is in the British Museum (Addit. 27457), and is here published for the first time.

"Greta Hall, Keswick,

"DEAR PURKIS,—

"Cumberland.

"I write to you from the leads of Greta Hall, a tenement in possession of S. T. Coleridge, Esq., gentleman, poet, and philosopher, in a mist! This Greta Hall

is a house on a small eminence, a furlong from Keswick, in the county of Cumberland. Yes, my dear sir, here I am, with Skiddaw at my back—on my right hand the Bassenthwaite Water, with its majestic *case* of mountains, all of simplest outline. Looking slant, direct over the feather of this infamous pen, I see the sun setting. My God! what a scene! Right before me is a great *camp* of single mountains—each, in shape, resembles a giant's tent; and to the left, but closer to it far than the Bassenthwaite Water to my right, is the Lake of Keswick, with its islands and white sails, and glossy lights of evening—crowned with green meadows; but the three remaining sides are encircled by the most fantastic mountains that ever earthquakes made in sport; as fantastic as if Nature had laughed herself into the convulsion in which they were made. Close behind me flows the Greta; I hear its murmuring distinctly. Then it curves round, almost in a semicircle, and is now catching the purple lights of the scattered clouds above it directly before me. . . .

“Till now I have been grievously indisposed, and I am enjoying the godlikeness of the place in which I am settled, with the voluptuous and joy-trembling nerves of convalescence. . . . At Liverpool I was very much with Roscoe—a man of the most fascinating manners: if good sense, sweetness, simplicity, hilarity, joining in a literary man, who is a good husband and the excellent father of nine children, can give any man's manners the claim of that word.



“ Sara Coleridge is well . . . Hartley is all health and ecstasy—he is a spirit dancing on an aspen leaf—unwearied in joy—from morning till night indefatigably joyous. . . . We have pleasant acquaintances here ; and I shall have free access to the magnificent library of Sir Wilfred Lawson. Yet you may well suppose I did not quit Stowey without dejection, and that I cannot now think of my separation from Poole without a pang. Now, while I gaze, there is one dark slip of cloud that lies across the bright sun on the mountain top! and such, my dear Purkis, is that thought to me! . . .

“ My wife will not let me stay on the leads—I must go and unpack a trunk for her. God bless you and

“ S. T. C.”

There is no doubting the enjoyment of life expressed in these lines. Coleridge was once more in his element. He looked on his indisposition as merely temporary. He desired to use this happy mood for poetical purposes, and applied himself to the second part of “Christabel,” which Wordsworth wanted him to finish in order to include it in the second volume of ‘Lyrical Ballads.’ But the Muse refused to obey him. He took many a walk “in the clouds, in the mountains.” The wind from Skiddaw and Borrowdale was often as loud as wind need be, but all would not do. But on one occasion of a visit, when he had drunk too freely, his verse-making faculties returned, though, as we have already shown, not with

the same fairy lightness as before. The power, too, was soon exhausted ; and the ballad remained a fragment, and unprinted. A string in the mental machinery of the poet had given way, and from reasons previously evident in Stowey. The same delight in nature which had inspired his finest poems, led him to ramble about in all weathers, bringing on his old inherited enemy of rheumatism, and this again he fought with that fatal remedy which turned his pathological symptoms into poetic dreams.

This calamity, as might be expected, entailed others not difficult to foresee. Mrs. Coleridge was the one who suffered most by the literary inactivity of her husband, and understood it least. She was an excellent house-keeper, a devoted mother, and a good woman, but she knew not how to manage a man of moods. She had early exchanged the gaiety of girlhood for the anxieties of matronhood. She was rather given to fears and complaints, so that Southey nicknamed her "Thisbe." Hardly an hour passed without little desponding ejaculations: "The cow is about to calve;" "The cow does not eat;" "The cow must be ill;" "We shall lose the cow." "Southey earns such-and-such, and my husband, with his superior talents, never bestirs himself," &c. &c. Thus she used to worry him with a swarm of little cares. Coleridge, however, unless actually driven to it, thought it almost sinful to disturb himself about so low a thing as money, and then he

asked for it from the nearest and surest source, namely, from the Wedgwoods. All the urgings in the world did nothing more than make him waste his time in fruitless plans, put him out of humour, and ask himself if this were really the woman for whom, while in Germany, he had so ardently longed. It was the old story of a poet-husband.

Perhaps he would not have been so keenly aware of what he missed, had he not been flattered by the enthusiastic sympathy of another lady. The person in question was Mrs. Robinson, called "Perdita," one of those literary ladies who associated with Godwin. Fascinating and gifted, she had been married at sixteen to a reputed rich American, whom, after a short period of luxury, she had followed to a debtors' prison. Having been helped on to the stage by Garrick, she had the misfortune to please the Prince of Wales in the character of Perdita; and heartless desertion was her reward, or penalty. Then she came out as a poetess; imitated Petrarch, bewailed Werther, and, under the name of "Laura Matilda," formed a society of mutual admiration, to which a cruel satirist put an end. She was now poor, sickly, and above forty years old, but still full of intellectual energy, editing the *belles-lettres* department of the *Morning Post*, and translating from Klopstock. Compassion opened Coleridge's heart to her, and the more readily from his contempt for the too notorious prince. Nor did he conceal his interest for her, nor his desire to comfort and to raise her. This is

seen in his lines, "To an unfortunate woman at the theatre":

"Thou hast known deceit and folly,  
Thou has felt that vice is woe;  
With a musing melancholy  
Inly armed, go, maiden, go."

The poem was written in London, and appeared (1800) in the "Annual Anthology." Also, when absent, he enquires for her in a letter to Godwin: "How is Mrs. Robinson? Remember me in the kindest and most respectful phrases to her." This sympathy was perhaps the last pleasure that fell to her lot. She thanked him in an ode with that feverish exuberance which indicates her own use of opium:

"Spirit divine! with thee will I wander.  
I'll mark thy sunny dome, and view  
Thy caves of ice; thy fields of dew"—

evidently alluding to his "Kubla Khan"! Like the beloved one in that poem, she strove to sing blissfully of "Thee, O favoured child of minstrelsy, sublimely wild." Signed "Sappho." Being ordered by her doctor into the country, she went to Keswick in the late summer, and there, in a second ode, invoked all good influences on the head of the new-born babe, Derwent, so named after Derwent Water; and this time her thoughts followed Coleridge's "Frost at Midnight." She possessed in the highest degree that ready and imaginative sympathy which the poet longed for from his wife. Early one Sunday morning he plundered his

landlord's garden of a nosegay for the benefit of the poor patient—a breach both of the third and eighth commandments, as he remarks in some humorous verses (Pickering, vol. ii.). And Sara had already been jealous of Miss Wordsworth!

Mrs. Robinson left in November 1800. Coleridge bewailed her departure in the elegy, "A Stranger Minstrel," describing her as "a lady of sweet song, and soft blue eyes." She died a few weeks after. The elegy appeared as a supplement to her Memoirs in 1801. This was followed a few years later by the publication of her poems, on which occasion Coleridge wrote another plaint, describing what he felt at her loss, called, "The Mad Monk."

For ten years he had passed through a constant succession of excitement; and the reaction now became more and more marked, the alienation between the pair always more evident. There was no quarrel, no harshness, no bitter word, but the relation between them was one of duty, rather than affection. Two poems illustrate the change—"The Night Scene" and "The Picture." The subject of both is love disillusioned, but with enduring fidelity. He, resigned to the condition, breathed freer, as if released from an inward pang, though, at the same time, very unhappy that his domestic castles in the air should have fallen to the ground, "and lazy snakes trail o'er the level ruins." He tried to recover himself by his own strength. "Yet art thou never great," he said to himself, "but by the inspiration of great passion."

The political events of the day now also ceased to stir him. He became indifferent to the long-desired overthrow of Pitt (February 1801) and to the anxiously mediated peace with France (March 1802). When Fox, his former favourite, paid a friendly visit to Paris, Coleridge called him a Jacobin, and more Gallic than British in his sentiments—a declaration which the gentle Lamb disapproved and regretted. He now looked on the strife of nations and parties the more “with hermit eye”—as expressed in the “Ode to Tranquillity”—in the *Morning Post* (2nd Nov. 1802),

“A wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile,  
Too foolish for a tear, too wicked for a smile.”

Even the pleasure he took in his children and friends did not cheer him. Hartley developed a precocious power of fancy and thought; understood at five years of age to distinguish between “Real Hartley, Shadow Hartley, Picture Hartley, Looking-glass Hartley, and Catch-me Hartley;” lived in wondrous dreams, and was admiringly celebrated by Wordsworth. Derwent threw perceptibly, and ran about in a little yellow coat, which procured him the name of “Stumpy Canary.” Sara, the only daughter, was born on 21st December, 1802. It is significant that her name was inscribed in the Family Bible by the mother, not by the father, and that through her whole childhood she showed great shyness of her father, and the most devoted attachment to her mother. The marriage of Wordsworth to his gentle wife, in 1802, increased the friendly circle. Lloyd

also came into the neighbourhood, and Southey, with wife and little daughter, came to reside with his brother-in-law, and filled Greta Hall with cheerful work. Agreeable visitors passed also that way ; in the summer of 1801, the poet Rogers ; a year later, Lamb and his sister ; in 1803, William Hazlitt, haughtier and gloomier than he had been in Shrewsbury, but with the same reverence as ever for great men, and especially for Coleridge, whose portrait he was now taking. Occasionally, too, the Quaker, Thomas Clarkson, the indefatigable apostle for the abolition of slavery, came with his highly cultivated wife. And on every occasion the brothers Wedgwood showed their generosity. Had he been in health Coleridge could not but have been happy. But he was martyred with gout ; his fingers swelled and his feet swelled, and then it went to his eyes, and then to his stomach. A Mr. Edmondson, from whom he borrowed a number of medical books, strengthened him in the use of opium. It helped to benumb the pain, but only for the moment. He had consequently to take more and more, till he became irretrievably dependent on it. His nerves now began to shake. Guiltless as he was, his nights were visited by the most horrible dreams, which he described in the poem, "The Panic of Sleep" —an elegiac pendant to "Kubla Khan,"—while by day his imagination was proportionately inactive. Powerless for emulation, he had now to acknowledge the perfection to which Wordsworth had attained in the second volume of the 'Lyrical Ballads.' "If I die," he wrote in a letter

to Godwin, "and the booksellers will give you anything for my Life, be sure to say, 'Wordsworth descended on him like the *γνώρι σεαντόν* from heaven; and by showing him what true poetry was, he made him know that he himself was no poet.'" His pen now became unproductive; for months he did not even write a letter, and when some solitary note of cheerfulness broke from him, as in his "Ode to Rain," we read in it also the sad indifference of a commonplace life. In 1803, a third edition of his poems was called for. It was sent, unrevised by him, to Lamb for revision. His face, by nature blooming, was now pale. One day would pass in heavy stupefaction, the next in childlike games, as if two different men dwelt in him. He feels that Wordsworth's stanzas written in his pocket copy of Thompson's 'Castle of Indolence' apply to himself. At thirty years of age Coleridge was a broken man.

The most touching expression of this barren mood is the "Ode to Dejection" (April 1802). As in his "Ode to France," Coleridge begins with the mighty features of nature—the winds, the clouds, and the Moon:

"as fixed as if it grew  
In its own cloudless, starless lake of blue."

Again he dwells pathetically on the delight with which landscape beauty once inspired him. Still, it sounds more like the echo of Schiller's dithyrambic to Joy than a tone from his own breast. And at the conclusion he renounces all hope of joy in Nature, as in "France" all hope of popular freedom. He is bowed down with



misery; each visitation suspends more and more his power of imagination; devils yell to him in the winds, in the clouds he sees fighting battalions with gaping wounds, and in the still pauses he hears the moans and screams of a child who has lost her way. "Farewell, joy;" "remain true to the happier friend, and show him everything from pole to pole in a higher life." This friend—in later editions, "a lady"—was meant doubtless for Wordsworth, whose cheerful, living mode of observation had much affected Coleridge; for the image of the crescent boat,

"among the stars,  
Through many a breathless field of light,  
Through many a long blue field of ether,"

was already given in "Peter Bell," while the idea of the little girl who had lost her way may be traced in "Lucy Gray." And from Coleridge's ode in turn did Wordsworth receive inspiration. He took up the fundamental idea—the contrast, namely, between the enjoyment of the young in the outer world, and the joylessness of the aging poet,—and so treated it in his "Intimations of Immortality in Childhood" (1803-6), that by Coleridge's entreaty he gave it a consoling and encouraging termination. At the same time, the preamble to "The Mad Monk," and the celebrated concluding lines, "Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears," were suggested by Coleridge's "Ode to Tranquillity." Coleridge, even in his decline, had a glow which kindled others. His "Depression" even threw some sparks into

Shelley's "Lines written in dejection near Naples;" for instance, the sweetness of despair in sight of a fine landscape, the deep despondence without a name, and the comparison with a tired child that cries itself to death.

The next years—1803, 4, and 5—produced no noteworthy poems, and "Dejection" may be considered as the poet's dirge to his own imagination.

He now sought for alleviation in philosophy, as he expresses himself in the same ode :

"And haply by abstruse research to steal  
From my own nature all the natural man ;  
This was my sole resource, my only plan."

A year before that he had already expressed this same openly in a letter to Godwin, owning that he felt "unfit to decide on any but works of severe logic. I look now on the mountains (that visible God Almighty that looks in at all my windows) only for the curves of their outlines." From poetry, which had become too sad an occupation, his mind now turned to speculation, simply because of the absorbing labour which it demanded.

The great question for Coleridge, as for all philosophers, was how to reconcile the mind of man with outer nature. Hitherto his best directed attempts had remained fruitless. Either he had declared—with Plato, Plotinus, and Berkeley—the Real to be the offspring of the Ideal; or he had admitted the materialism of Hartley, or the corporeal and realistic pantheism of

Spinoza, or the mystical self-alienation theory of Jacob Böhme. A condition of equilibrium had to be found, and this was offered him by Kant. It was in Keswick that Coleridge first began to study Kant's writings regularly. As an introduction to them he made use of a small octavo volume of two or three sheets, entitled 'Kant's Logic,' a piratical print from the MS. of a lecture. He found it very convincing, and had nothing to censure, except that two-thirds of the book were, as usual, "accommodated to the old ideas." This he wrote himself in the regular edition of 'Kant's Logic' in the British Museum. From such popular versions he passed on to the prefaces to the systematic works, and finally to these themselves. This cleared away, to his view, the old antithesis of words and things; "words became elevated into things, and living things too," till both presented themselves to him in "a simple organic union, like the parts and germinations of a plant" (to Godwin, 22nd September, 1800).

And now Coleridge set himself to investigate the groundwork "of this new world of intellectual forms." He planned a quarto volume of 600 pages, entitled 'Organum Vere Organum,'—"a collection of all possible modes of true, probable, and false reasonings, with a strict analysis of their origin and operation." The work was to supersede the 'Organum Novum' of Bacon, and all dogmatic philosophy in general. A month later the undertaking assumed a more gigantic form. The whole realm of human knowledge was to

be compressed into a 'Bibliotheca Britannica' of eight volumes ; not only, as hitherto executed, a great *omnium gatherum*, with an alphabetical index, but divided into subjects with exhaustive thoroughness, and reduced to ultimate principles. He wrote, it is true, nothing more than a few letters to friends in preparation for the work, and especially to Southey. He then buried himself in Kant, as formerly in Plotinus. And although thus devoted to the Kantian system, he could not refrain from introducing as far as possible his old pantheistic views ; he doubted, namely, whether Kant really regarded "the thing in itself" as without all form whatsoever, and brought in something of the platonic realism of an impersonal God, which he believed Kant could not have openly professed without incurring the martyrdom of a Giordano Bruno, or Wolff ; the literal fact being that Kant believed himself to have provided the strongest argument in defence of the faith in the personal God of Christianity, by enfranchising us from all acknowledgment of "the thing in itself." This misconception of Kant shows how much Coleridge was inclined to reason through his imagination, instead of through his understanding. He thought less of confirming a system, than of harmonising his own concrete ideas. His logic was of no very strict kind, and any contradiction soon unhorsed him. According to Madame de Stael, who made his acquaintance a dozen years later, "he was rich in monologue, but poor in dialogue." He had often mixed up philosophy in

his poems, and now he mixed up poetry with his philosophy.

These speculations occupied him so much that he altogether neglected his interest in Lessing. The plans of translating him and writing his life were now given up. He returned at most to the Lessing track when, after the appearance of Godwin's work on Chaucer, he proposed to undertake a critical analysis of that father of English poetry by comparing him with his contemporaries, predecessors, and successors. This plan of course also came to nothing; and meanwhile his study of Kant procured him that dreamy, passive forgetfulness of all worldly things in which it was his nature to indulge.

But this state was far from satisfying his friends, or, in his saner moments, himself. Philosophy presented a source of alleviation, but had no healing power. From time to time, therefore, he tried what change of place could do. He went for some months to London in November 1801, where he was less plagued with gout, and somewhat cheered by society. The friends with whom he chiefly associated there, were Poole, who had left Stowey for the Metropolis, in order to watch over some Parliamentary affairs concerning the Poor Laws; John Stoddart, a clever young barrister, who was appointed "King's advocate" in Malta in 1803, and who, later, contributed by his writing to the world-wide reputation of the *Times*; Basil Montague, a barrister of literary fame, an authority in the Bankruptcy Court,

and an adherent to Godwin's views, to which he would have sacrificed his position, had not Mackintosh prevented him; and finally and especially, Humphrey Davy, the great chemist, a friend of Cottle, and Beddoe's most learned scholar. He was then engaged in investigating the effects of laughing-gas, which he made Coleridge inhale, who was always ready to philosophize on the universal connection between all the laws of nature. Had he not even composed a pious poem on Spinoza's system? By January 1802, Coleridge was again in this circle; offering a publisher an Essay on Jeremy Taylor, which of course he never finished. In the spring of 1803, also, we find him in London, in the society of Sotheby, the translator of "Oberon"; and in that of the then comparatively unknown collector of ballads, Walter Scott; always ready to read "Christabel" aloud, and always eager to banish the memory of his youthful radicalism. From time to time, too, making trips to Bristol, and to Gunville, the residence of the brothers Wedgwood. In November and December 1802, he had sauntered through Wales and Devonshire with Mr. Thomas Wedgwood, exerting all his winning cheerfulness to dissipate the melancholy with which his benefactor was afflicted. But no sooner did he return to Keswick from these excursions than all their good effects disappeared, equally from mind and body. And it was worse in Scotland, whither he accompanied the Wordsworths in August 1803; the weather was abominable, and brought on his worst rheumatism, so that

after a fortnight at Loch Lomond he had to return alone.

He had already, in January 1801, formed the plan of visiting some land of the sun, where he might work against his enemy, opium, by a grape cure, and renovate himself among a southern people. And every fresh attack fortified this idea. First he thought of taking a voyage with Thomas Wedgwood to Sicily or the Canary Islands, and then of touring alone through France and Italy. At last he made up his mind, and left Keswick for Madeira on the 20th December, 1803. Sadly did he part from his family, and yet was "glad to break loose," believing, much more than was really the case, that he was a burden to his wife. After the winter was over he hoped to return well and fit for work.

Coleridge had all the bad luck of Ulysses, without his wisdom. He had gone to Grasmere in fog and rain to take leave of Wordsworth. Scarcely had he arrived when his limbs began to swell, his digestive powers failed, and he was confined to his room for a fortnight, till dry frosty weather set him free. Wordsworth regarded him with the deepest compassion, and compelled him to accept £100 towards his travelling expenses.

On the 20th January, 1804, he set out for Liverpool, where he was taken in for a week by his old Unitarian friends, was nursed and listened to. Then in London, where he lived with Poole, he remained for two months, allowed Northcote to take his portrait, and continued to suffer from swollen hands and benumbed senses till the

winter was well over. All thought of the future yielded to the temptation of the moment. His evil genius turned all his best and most honest intentions to nought. It was not till the beginning of April that, by Stoddart's pressing invitation, he took ship for Malta. Five years before, he had embarked for Germany with the most ardent thirst for knowledge ; now he left his country weary and strengthless.

From the 8th April, 1804, to the 27th September, 1805, almost a year and a half, he stayed in Malta ; but the chief object of his stay remained unfulfilled. At first he improved ; but as soon as the novelty of change of air was over, he felt oppressed with the monotony of the eternal blue sky, while the summer heat upset his nerves. But little cheerful companionship was to be had ; and though he mastered the Italian tongue, he took neither to the country nor to the people as he had done at Ratzeburg and Göttingen. His first impression on landing had been only that of strangeness, and this impression continued till he left. The landscape, with its dazzling lights and sharp outlines, the brilliant luxuriance, without woods or twilight, were unsympathetic to him. The sandstone which forms the material of the Maltese fortifications, and of the rectangular streets and pavements, offended his eye with its dazzling untuned colour. The Romantic school loves a patina ! The natives, however nimble their movements, however plastic their forms, gave him only a passing interest ; they lacked cleanliness outwardly, and from the



sadly abused celibacy of the knights, they lacked purity inwardly. In addition to this, their bad, half-Arabic Italian interrupted all intercourse. The English colony consisted almost entirely of consumptive patients, whom Coleridge only saw declining more and more, of traders for whom he was too honest, and of soldiers. Stoddart, as it appears, was absorbed in the duties of his office. No popular song, no suggestive picture reached Coleridge, so he stuck the closer to his opium, to foreign politics, and to abstract philosophy.

Malta itself, more than any other place, was calculated to exemplify the bloody game of diplomacy. The island was considered the key to Egypt and to the East. First taken by Napoleon, and then by the English, her importance to England increased in proportion as Italy fell more and more under French rule. According to the Peace of Amiens, the island was to be restored to the knights. But the Union Jack held its place pertinaciously in the harbour of Valetta while the ambitious schemes of the First Consul threatened danger both to north and south. It became indeed the occasion for the renewal of the war—May 1803. Even the Radical party in England, who at one time opposed the war with the Republic, now sided with the Government. It was evident that no greater enemy to freedom existed than the recently-crowned Soldier-Emperor. Coleridge found himself suddenly on the very site of the apple of discord, and could but interest himself in the conflict. In Stoddart he found a thoroughly sound

teacher. He was presented to the Governor, Admiral Sir Alex. Ball, who had not only captured the island, but now held it against friend and foe, and who at once appointed our eminent author his secretary. Sir Alexander was a brave old sailor. From a haughty rival of Nelson's he had become the preserver of his life, and his "right arm." He had blown up the French admiral's ship at the battle of the Nile. By his own people, and by the Maltese, he was honoured like a father. He showed Coleridge great respect, but did not hesitate to evince impatience when the secretary on one occasion propounded the distinction between "an unorganised mass of matter," and "a mass of unorganised matter." He did not dispute the problem, but he employed him to purchase grain in Sicily, proposed to send him to the Morea to bargain for oxen, and indoctrinated him gradually with the politics of matter-of-fact. Coleridge, in return, upon Sir Alexander's death, was the first to record his life and deeds in the *Friend* with all the warmth of "an humble and ever grateful friend."

His spare hours were spent by Coleridge in Kantian speculations. In the midst of orange groves and pepper-trees—with venerable structures on the one hand, and men-of-war on the other—he buried himself in the books he had brought with him. As there was no one with whom he could talk over his studies, he took up the habit of jotting down on the margin his doubts, suggestions, or approval—a habit he indulged more and

more with increasing years. Numerous volumes thus enriched have made their way to the British Museum (see Helen Zimmern—*Blackwood's Magazine*, 1882), and thus afford welcome finger-posts to his further development.

At the same time, it must not be forgotten that Coleridge studied the adversaries of Kant as well as the master himself. What he scribbled on the margin of Herder's 'Kalligone'—the keenest and severest polemic against Kant's 'Æsthetik'—is peculiarly characteristic. He regretted that Herder, who in the main had adhered to the sound but empirical standard of Locke, should have connected the general forms of human thought with individual ideas. He inveighed against Herder's immoderate enthusiasm for the Greeks,—“that endless rant about the Greeks and Homer, with no love of truth, no feeling of reality, no connection of those fineries with the real history of those eulogised Greeks, their manners, ignorance, cruelty, treatment of women, &c. &c.” He called the whole book, “A six-inch-deep gutter of muddy philosophisms, from the drainings of a hundred sculleries,” and worse still. Coleridge's enthusiasm for Kant made him unjust towards others.

On questions of religion also, and on private and public morality, he took part with Kant.

In September 1800, he had imparted to Godwin his indecision about the little Hartley—whether, namely, he should bring him up as a believer, or “without solemn lies.” He was then in a state of hesitation. This desire to reconcile faith and knowledge was as yet

unfulfilled, because he wanted to apply faith and knowledge in the same degree to one and the same thing. Kant, by defining the limits of human knowledge, had abundantly enjoined the exercise of faith. Where objective conviction ceases, subjective conviction must and can only commence, and the means to this end is the separation between the understanding and the reason. With the one, we form our opinion as to the world of outer appearances ; with the other, we grasp those ideas of freedom, immortality and God, which in themselves can neither be proved nor denied, but yet are practically indispensable for social morality. "Reason," henceforth, was the magic word with which Coleridge invoked the secrets of religion, and always, as far as I can judge, on the principles of Kant ; not, as John Stuart Mill maintained, with the vaguer sentimentality of Jacobi. On this principle of reason, and not on any external authority, did he base Christianity ; maintaining the truth of miracle and prophecy because he believed in Christianity, not the reverse. In accordance with this principle he again lifted up his soul and prayed, not for any direct aid, but for grace and strength. From this principle of reason, in strongest opposition to any profit or pleasure, he deduced the laws of morality, and simply taught his hearers to follow Kant's categorical principle that "we are to obey duty for its own sake, and in direct opposition to our inclinations. To find his duty in the enjoyment of perfect harmony between every part of man, would

not be human, but angelic happiness." (Gillman, p. 177.) The relation of the State, also, to the individual citizen should be determined by reason, free from all selfishness. "Political, true freedom consists not merely in the enjoyment, but in the security of the enjoyment of equal laws." Constitutional monarchy is therefore in every respect to be preferred to absolute monarchy. Thus reconciled with the Church and Constitution in which he had been brought up, Coleridge returned from Malta. He now no longer comprehended the fact of his former adherence to Hartley, and to the Unitarians. Thus it was to Kant—the much-abused of all the orthodox—that he owed his conversion.

His journey home was marked by more delay and embarrassment than his journey out. At first, and in spite of his increasing ill-health, he was detained by Sir Alex. Ball, who had found no successor to him. When at last at liberty to leave, he took the land route through Italy; climbed both Etna and Vesuvius; stayed for a time in Naples, where the tidings of Nelson's victory and death reached him, and where he played the part of a patriot spectator at a muster of the allied troops. His remark on that occasion was, that in the Russian regiments all faces were alike; in the English, all different. At the beginning of 1806 he was in Rome, luxuriating in the treasures of art, and still more in the society of living artists and patrons of art. He made acquaintance with

Alston, the American painter, who so enchanted him with his works, that he let him take his portrait ; with Migliarini, the Italian critic, who lectured to him on Dante, which Coleridge returned by doing the same on Shakespeare ; with Tieck, the German writer, to whom he expatiated on the spurious plays of Shakespeare ; with Cardinal Fesch ; with the Prussian ambassador, Baron Wilhelm von Humboldt, who kept a great house, where he received Thorwaldsen, Koch, Angelica Kauffman, Rauch and others, and was then engaged in writing an elegy on Rome. He was also interested in the Papal ceremonial ; in the management of the Propaganda ; and in the superstitions of the people ; showing that healthy and happy interest in everything about him, which, from his scant and complaining letters from Malta, no one would have expected. Thus all went well until the summer, when Humboldt suddenly received intelligence that Coleridge had been proscribed by Napoleon. The articles in the *Morning Post* had not been overlooked in Paris. The order for his arrest had already arrived, and the Pope had been instructed to deliver up every Englishman in Rome within thirty-six hours. Good old Pope Pius VII. was himself in great embarrassment, but had still the courage and humanity to save Coleridge. He sent a Benedictine monk to him next morning, with pass and carriage, in which, disguised as the chaplain of Cardinal Fesch, this bitter enemy of all priestcraft immediately left Rome at full gallop ('Caro-

line Fox's Journal'). He reached Genoa in fog and darkness. There he accidentally found an American captain, and practised on him his wonted powers of persuasion so successfully, that he rigged him out with jacket, knee-breeches, and a basket of vegetables, took him on board ship as steward, and smuggled him out to sea. Even there he was in danger from a French man-of-war. All his Roman papers had to be thrown overboard. The passage to England lasted fifty-five days; during that time he was so ill that his life was twice given over. It was in August 1806, that, with empty pockets, increased rheumatic pains, a deeper despondency, and with hair turning grey, he touched his native soil after a year and a half's absence. Lamb called him "an archangel, a little damaged."

In England new worries awaited him. Thomas Wedgwood had died in the interim; his brother naturally wished for some tribute to his memory from the pen of Coleridge, who fully acknowledged this duty of gratitude, but never found the right mood. He thus lost the most generous of patrons. Other friends discovered that he had become too orthodox. The Government applied to him for information as to the state of things in the Mediterranean, but answered his well-founded appeal for stricter measures with an insulting refusal. But the worst pain of all was the thought of his poor, careworn wife. For weeks he did not venture to open her letters, far less to write to her. Disillusion, weakness of purpose, and stings of con-

science combined to bring on a condition of dejection which bordered on cowardice.

Slowly, and in dread, he approached his home. Wordsworth, then at Grasmere, was on the point of finishing that poetic account of his own youthful development which is given in "The Prelude." He had dedicated it to Coleridge, and read it aloud to him with honest pride. It describes an active, firm mind in harmony with its high aims. It was no wonder that Coleridge's verse broke out in gratulation for his friend, and pity for himself (Pickering, vol. ii. p. 224); that he felt that his youth was gone, and his manhood unproductive; and that he gave vent to his feelings in the poem called "The Tombless Epitaph." In Keswick he felt himself almost a stranger. The children were grown and promising. So precocious a child as Hartley demanded superior teaching, and for him he drew up a new kind of Greek 'First Lessons'—grammar and lexicon in one—wishing his son to learn the language of Homer earlier than that of Virgil. But the warm affection he had once borne his wife now seemed to him like a dream. His "Farewell to Love," and other small poems of this time, are evidences of the utter lack of energy which now possessed him. An anecdote of the time ('W. Collier's Journal') relates how one day he called on a medical man, and with tears in his eyes, complained that his wife was really beside herself; for, on the coldest mornings, and with icicles hanging from the roof, she would require him to get up.



in his nightshirt and light the fire, before she dressed herself and the children. In vain did he seek to cultivate little Sara—she clung timidly to her mother. At this time he came across a young lady with those intellectual sympathies which Mrs. Coleridge failed to give him—perhaps Mrs. Clarkson?—and with her he resumed his old walks. Gossip and jealousy soon compelled him to give this up. He spent more time with Wordsworth, who understood him, than with his own family. Humanity, Coleridge had in abundance, but too little manliness.

The year 1807 passed in restless searchings for help and employment. Before then, he had left Keswick again, taking little Hartley with him, his wife and the two other children following in a few months. He went first to Sir George Beaumont at Coleorton, a painter and great lover of art, and intimate with Wordsworth; thence to London, to Basil Montague's, to show his little boy the Tower and the theatre. Hartley at once wrote a tragedy, and was indignant that his father took but little notice of it. Thence to Bristol, where Cottle could only admire the abundance of his plans and the piety of his talk, and then to Stowey, where Poole was astonished at the purposelessness of his ways. Again he reclined upon the Quantock Hills; again he listened to the rippling of the streams; again he sought the spot where imagination and happiness had once smiled on him, and there he wrote his hopeless "Recollections of Love." He would have visited his relations in Ottery,

but that his brother George was suffering so severely from gout—the family ailment—as to oblige him to give up his school. Later in July we find our poet in a friend's house in Bridgwater, where an unexpected gleam of good fortune smiled upon him. He made the acquaintance of a young man of independent means, Thomas De Quincey, afterwards known as a writer of Essays, an opium eater, a compiler of memoirs more interesting than trustworthy, and a highly gifted dreamer like Coleridge himself, whose acquaintance he had long ardently desired. From him Coleridge received much flattering homage, and through the good offices of Cottle, an anonymous present of £300. But that was only a nail in a tottering wall. He had to rouse himself to exertion, and requested De Quincey to convey his family back to Keswick, while he himself went to London and was enrolled by Stuart as contributor to his new paper, the *Courier*. An uncomfortable room in the Strand, three stairs high, was placed at his disposal, a dirty old woman waited upon him, and the noise and racket of the city surrounded him; Napoleon was to be fought, not one of our Continental allies holding their own against him—no enviable time for a writer. He contributed, as it appears, only a few verses to the *Courier*. A more congenial occupation was still to be found.

Humphrey Davy discovered one. Immediately after Coleridge's return from Malta, he had invited him not to confine his critical dissertations to private society, but to

let them be heard in the form of public lectures. The Royal Institution, founded in 1799, offered place and opportunity for this purpose. Davy himself was heard there every Saturday forenoon, surrounded by his tremendous voltaic battery, and at his suggestion, Coleridge was invited. He agreed to the proposal, but, after renewed importunity from Davy, only proceeded to fulfil the engagement in February 1808. Five courses, with five lectures each, were announced. Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, Pope, and the more modern poets were to be treated "in illustration of the general principles of poetry." The pay was to be one hundred guineas. This, at all events, was a way of extrication for talents, pocket, and honour.

But our poet did not show himself to be in earnest. Physical and mental excuses were allowed to intervene. He absented himself without due notice, while a number of fashionable carriages and pedestrians crowded the entrance in Albemarle Street. After a delay of half an hour he was reported as ill—just the same as in 1794, when he had undertaken to lecture on the Fall of Rome for Southey. On the first occasion, the announcement was received with unfeigned regret; but the second time the crowd became angry, and the third, they stayed away. Instead of giving two lectures a week, as had been announced, he spread his eighteen deliveries over more than four months—indeed, up to 13th June, 1808, and then broke off suddenly on plea of ill-health, and went north. The lectures were a disappointment. He

delayed the requisite preparation for them, and took the whole matter too carelessly; altered his programme, and in no way made up to his hearers for the alteration; and with his parched lips, pale face, awkward action, poor voice, and bad delivery, created a most uncomfortable impression. At the same time, when in stimulating society, all the old charm of his conversation returned; it was only regular work and duty which seemed impossible to him. "Despite his exalted genius," said Davy, "his enlarged views, sensitive heart and enlightened mind, he will be the victim of want of order, precision and regularity." "His lectures adopted in all respects the German doctrines, clothed with original illustrations, and adapted to an English audience." These were the words of Henry Crabb Robinson, a young barrister, a votary of Wordsworth, thoroughly acquainted with German literature, who had just returned from Weimar, and had been introduced to Coleridge by Mrs. Clarkson. This verdict is confirmed in his own letters and journals; the only source whence the real character of these lectures can be gathered.

According to these, Coleridge lectured the second day, February 5th, on the doubly consecrated origin of the drama, from Greek mythology and Christian humanity. His facts were taken from the works of Wharton and Malone, but their mode of application clearly recalls Herder's 'Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte.' It was the peculiarity of Herder, in common with all many-sided minds, to impart know-

ledge even to his bitterest adversaries. Coleridge descanted on the breadth and largeness which should enter into all poetic delineation of character, and on the universality of Shakespeare in this respect; and it is evident that Kant's 'Kritik der Urtheilskraft' and the 69th number of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* were here floating before his mind.

On another day (May 7th) he lectured on the education of children, maintaining that the child acquires the moral sense rather through his feelings than through any clearly explained motives; rather through loving incitement to thought, than through argument. Practice and habit must also be enlisted to attain any sound knowledge and power of self-control. These educational principles were probably his own, and founded on experience. At the same time, it may be mentioned that they are already inculcated in Kant's 'Metaphysik der Sitten.'

In the next following lectures he deduced the invention of the fine arts from the necessities of primeval man, tracing it in such close connection with Herder's 'Kalligone,' that Crabb Robinson's notes of the lecture read almost like the index to the first chapter of that work. He further, in the manner of Kant, drew the distinction between poetry and eloquence; the one leading to "special acts," while the other obeys only a general impulse. Finally, he pointed out the "naïve" as the essential quality of poetic genius; defining it exactly as Kant has done, as the outbreak of natural

truth against that art of dissembling which becomes second nature.

On the 14th May he entered upon Shakespeare. High moral feeling was to be gathered from his dramas, from the very fact of their often gross but never vicious *naïveté*. Richardson, with all his moralising, is vulgar, and "only interesting"; but Shakespeare is always harmonious and elevating. This thought, even if not its application to Shakespeare and Richardson, is taken from Schiller's treatise, "Ueber naive und sentimentalische Dichtung." Coleridge was not likely to have overlooked that remarkable paper, which most contributed to approximate Kant's criticism on art to that of the Romantic school. Other remarks on Shakespeare, upon the freedom with which he borrowed his characters from Nature, thus preserving truth of art, in spite of the improbability of his plots, agree in the main points with Nos. 19 and 93 of the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie*. Lessing's discovery that Shakespeare was not only a great genius, but an equally great artist, was now for the first time openly asserted in England. With intelligible national pride, Coleridge went further still. He wanted to acquit Shakespeare of every human imperfection; declared that the repulsive character of Lady Anne in "Richard III." was a spurious interpolation, and placed the dramas of the Elizabethan time in point of passion and moral feeling above the choral tragedies of the Greeks—as if the very difference in their respective aims did not sufficiently forbid any such comparisons.

Finally, he carried Lessing's somewhat narrow contempt for French tragedy so far as to call Voltaire a "petty scribbler."

To insure the successful reception of such views, Coleridge ought to have prepared an exposition of a far more careful, connected, and exhaustive kind. But all he offered were a series of intellectual fragments, more startling than convincing. Nor did the modern poets come in even for a notice, while, on the other hand, he expatiated without end on Lord Nelson and Sir Alex. Ball. He was quite conscious of his comparative failure, and quitted the field hastily. No sooner, however, had he returned to the Lake country, than, in spite of his melancholy experience in the form of the *Watchman*, he resumed his intellectual activity by setting up a new periodical.

*The Friend*—such was its name—was a weekly paper, the object of which was "to aid in the formation of fixed principles in politics, morals, and religion," and in the higher education of mankind, by means of examples from every source of Western literature. The chief representatives of this widely extended field—Addison, Johnson, Mackenzie—were now ardently explored by Coleridge, in order to collect from them some popular exposition of philosophical thought. Nor was this enough; he aimed to be more philosophic still, and to mix up, on the one hand, transcendental criticism with admonitions on practical wisdom; while, on the other hand, he acknowledged the necessity of the greater

pains in clothing such matter in an attractive style. Leading articles, the news of the day, reviews, *et hoc genus omne* by which the *Watchman*, in his opinion, had been swamped, were banished from the *Friend*. In the first week of December—a year after his first conception of the project—he sent out the printed announcements, dated from Grasmere, where he was residing with the Wordsworths, and in January 1809 the first number was to appear.

It appeared on the 1st July! It was not calculated for popularity, nor were the succeeding numbers. “*Qui trop embrasse, mal etreint.*” Coleridge again tried to compass too much. The thoroughness with which he sought to present his subject, betrayed him into terrible diffusenesses. He rambled so far wide and aside, and left the chief topic so long waiting, that all interest took flight. He revelled also in abstract expressions, and built up the most involved periods in the attempt to forestall every variety of objection. The paragraphs are so perversely arranged that the point is difficult to find; and the arrangement of the chapters lacks all order. Never had Coleridge desired to write with more vivacity, and never had he written more heavily; and this style he never again threw off. He credited his laconic countrymen with the same unwearied power of thought, for thinking’s sake, that in times of depression he had himself acquired. He was aware of his mistake, for his friends and contributors took care to let him know it. He began therefore to vary the



dull matter by an occasionally more entertaining chapter; parables from Jewish devotional works, poems by Wordsworth and by himself, letters that he had written from Germany, and recollections of Admiral Sir Alex. Ball, who had died on the 25th October, 1809, &c.: but these do not amalgamate with the didactic portions, and only appear here and there, like scant plums in a cake. There is a want of direct and clear aim in the work; so that, with all its logic in detail, it is difficult to define its real contents.

Diffuse and circumstantial preliminaries take the lead. The author expatiates on the necessity of referring "men's opinions to their absolute principles"—a favourite expression of his; and, again, not alone to those of the intellect, but also to those of the heart. He defends the right of the feelings, and of the (theoretically) obscure ideas of freedom, immortality, and of God, because they are necessary for the perfection of the human race—Kant's practical postulate. He upholds also the right of the imagination, and defines it, as Kant did, as the prerogative of genius as compared with mere talent; carrying the child's sense of wonder forward into the ripeness of manhood.

As regarded politics, he sided neither with absolute authority, nor with blind Jacobinism; neither with "the ague of a Hobbes, nor with the fever of a Rousseau." His ideal in this field of thought, lay not in the eighteenth, but in the seventeenth century; namely, in the persons of Hampden, Milton, and Sidney. Finally,

he upheld the duty of nations to act towards each other according to the laws of conscience; as an example of the departure from which he instanced the recent bombardment of Copenhagen by the English, without the previous observance of a declaration of war. He lamented that an English statesman should in this respect have separated the laws of morality from those of diplomacy, though at the same time, in spite of all his philosophy, the Tory peeps out in his avowal that he approved the measure.

At this point—15th March, 1810—Coleridge announced the termination of his Introduction! Twenty-seven numbers had appeared, without his having reached the chief object of the publication. Only twice had he slightly touched upon it; the first time in allusion to Dr. Johnson's definition of an epitaph; namely, that the laws of a poetic speciality were to be deduced, not from its usage, but from its destination. The second criticism was directed against the reigning reviewers, especially against those of the *Edinburgh Review*, which, since its foundation in 1802, had loaded the "Lake poets" with abuse and ridicule. His opportunity ended here; his subscribers left him in the lurch, and the undertaking was silently condemned, ninety out of the original hundred having dropped off at the fourth number. It was not only the dryness of the contents, and their disagreeable form, which had repelled them, but the irregularity with which the work appeared. In spite of the warning

experience of the *Watchman*, Coleridge had undertaken to be his own publisher. He even bought his own paper and type, because he thought Southey had been cheated by his printer; and as the stamp on each sheet cost fivepence, a considerable outlay was required before a word was printed. Thus it was that the third number, which should have appeared on the 15th July, only came out on the 10th August, and the fourth number only on the 7th September. Nor were other causes of delay wanting. Grasmere gave him the advantage of intercourse with the Wordsworths; with De Quincey, who had faithfully followed him thither; with John Wilson, the "Christopher North" of *Blackwood's Magazine*, and the professor of moral philosophy in Edinburgh; and also with Bishop Watson, who was helpful as a politician and land proprietor, if not as a theologian. And many other names might be mentioned. But, on the other hand, it was nineteen English miles from the nearest post town—Kendal—and twenty-eight from the printing-office, Penrith. With such mistakes in its management, the undertaking, despite much labour and many night watches, must have entailed a heavy loss.

Still, the historical significance of the *Friend* must not be under-valued. It was one of the first protests against the merely useful, the merely moral, which had been the fashion till now. It recommends not only prudence, but wisdom; not only verbal truth, but veracity; not only legality, but rectitude. It is a

laudation of the long neglected forces of the soul ; of "the mysterious mother of conscience ;" of the Kantian principle of reason in its most romantic interpretation, "the best and holiest gift of Heaven, the bond of union with the Giver." In the very vagueness of the poetical language, the newest principles were characteristically shown. The Romantic school was not only a movement in literature, but it extended its influence into the domain of public morality. Far from thinking there was anything new in this, Coleridge only claimed the merit of recalling what was good in the past. He sought to indicate this by numerous mottos appended to the single chapters. His views were attributed to the teachers of his own youth, and to the teaching of preceding centuries ; the distinction between the understanding and the reason, to St. Paul ; the ideas which, according to Kant, we possess by the aid of reason, independent of all experience, to the eternal verities of Plato and Descartes ; the claims of conservative policy, to the saying of Spinoza, "*Animi libertas, seu fortitudo, privata virtus est, ac imperii virtus securitas.*" In one respect it would have been more right and just if he had quoted Kant himself. But Coleridge did not care so much about the origin of his doctrines, as about their universal connection. In his own development he had, like Goethe, branched off from the cultivation of poetry—his chief vocation—into other and most various lines ; thus his aim in the education of a people was for universality. With all his piety, he had something

of that Titanic impulse which had been so mightily symbolised in the first part of "Faust," now just published, in 1807.

In this drama, or more properly, "mystery," he took immediate and direct interest. He read it first while occupied with the *Friend*, determined to translate it, and set to work on it after the appearance of Madame de Stael's "Allemagne." Meanwhile the *Friend* had given him an opportunity to describe in a note the scene where Faust is beginning the translation of the Bible, and is interrupted by Mephistopheles. A number of features,—the student's old-fashioned room, the midnight lamp, the apparition of the devil out of the wall,—all these are so exactly given as to have attracted the remark of an English writer (*Edinburgh Review*, vol. lxi. p. 147). But just at the point where the two writers drew nearest to each other, the different view of the problem of the French Revolution, as taken respectively by the German and by the Englishman, became most evident. In the place of the Naturalist, in whom Goethe represented himself, Coleridge unceremoniously employed Luther; the scene is changed to the Wartburg, and the inkstand is thrown at the devil's head. Goethe trusted to the inborn goodness of man; Coleridge took his stand on the Church, the reformation of which was all he desired. The one returned to a genial paganism; the other, with true Anglo-Saxon tenderness, held to Christianity. The one was in his inmost nature a Humanist the other a Protestant, satisfied with the

liberty of private judgment, and granting all liberty to the investigation of the Scriptures. The one simply wished man to be noble, beneficent, and good; the other wished him, in addition, to use prayer. Hence the criticism on Goethe which Coleridge uttered in conversation, "his want of moral life, religion and enthusiasm." His Mephistopheles, to his view, was a creation of no character; his Faust, "a wretched creature, heartlessly planning the ruin of Gretchen, and who, rather than be finitely good, wanted to be infinitely better" (Robinson, vol. i.). The same feeling against Goethe was expressed by Wordsworth, Southey, Lamb, and De Quincey; and it cost Crabb Robinson no small trouble to make them understand the symbolic meaning of Goethe's characters. Coleridge even talked of setting up an opposition "Faust." Michael Scott, the old magician of Sir Walter Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel," was to be possessed by the modern thirst for unlimited knowledge and power, and to succumb to the temptations of a humorous devil by trying to betray a young and loving maiden. But she was to stand firm; "the conviction of a salvation for sinners, through God's grace," was to dawn within her, and so preserve her for final triumph.

Rightly did Crabb Robinson protest against the moralising triviality of the project; little better than the warming up of Richardson's "Pamela," with magical and philosophical additions. And rightly did he make sure that the plan would come to nothing; that Cole-

ridge would "lose himself in dreams." The power of grasping the Promethean idea was first reserved in England for Byron and Shelley.

A practical pendant to the utterly theoretical *Friend*, may be studied in the eight letters on the rising in Spain by Coleridge, which appeared in the *Courier* at the same time (17th December, 1809, to 20th January, 1810). Here he also treats of the pre-eminence of the reason above the mere understanding—of the power of the unfettered feelings over the most skilful calculations.

The fortune of war had returned to Napoleon on the Ebro; the English troops had been forced to retreat to the coast. Many a cotton-spinner at home, at the closing of the Continental markets, asked whether, in case of victory, trade would return; and the Liberals prophesied that all further resistance to the conqueror would end ill. On this Coleridge came forward, and contended for Conservative freedom; as Wordsworth at about the same time did in his sonnets to Hofer and to Toussaint l'Overture, and Southey in the just-founded *Quarterly Review*. Emphatically did Coleridge point to the mighty impulses of honour and right; to the wonderful tenacity with which our fancy clings to old customs; and to the sacred instinct which, in the course of centuries, loyalty had become. He cited the example of the resistance of the Netherlands to Philip II.; how a nation, so animated, can triumph over the most experienced generals and the best dis-

ciplined armies; and how much she gains internally in return for external sacrifices. Such discussions on moral principles appeared to him to unfold the very spirit of genuine foresight, and the result proved him to be right. Involuntarily are we reminded of the then recent 'Reden an die Deutsche Nation' by Fichte (1807), which called upon the German people to make a similar resistance to the invader. It is true Coleridge did not possess Fichte's clear and tremendous energy; but, on the other hand, the Englishman is marked by that appreciation of the instinctive which Germany was only to learn from her through the Romantic school.

And here we may speak of a critical treatise by our author; an Introduction to an "Essay on Taste" (1810). He here occupies himself with the fundamental question of the doctrine of beauty. How is it possible, he asks, that a verdict on Taste, depending as it ever does on likes and dislikes, and therefore strictly subjective, should pretend to universal acceptance? This Essay is a proof that Coleridge had no sooner buried the *Friend* than he formed the plan of composing a fundamental work on *Æsthetics*.

He at last became convinced of the impossibility of continuing to reside at his beloved Lakes. An immoderate use of opium gave him momentary relief from his pains; nor was his appearance, to superficial observers, other than healthy and robust; but his brain showed signs of suspicious irritability. He made not



only the most unheard-of plans, but imagined that he had already in great part carried them out. Thus he offered the printer of the *Friend* the publication of a large Greek grammar and Greek-English dictionary (1809). The letter is in the Forster Library at South Kensington. Neither had any other existence than in the little work put together for Hartley's use, which we have already mentioned. A spontaneous impulse led him to mask the indolence of the moment with coloured plans for the future, which in turn lapsed into the most exaggerated self-torment. One day he would care as little for worldly matters as "the lilies of the field," and the next be sunk in the deepest melancholy, doubting even the friendship of Wordsworth. And yet things went on comparatively well as long as he remained with that sympathising friend. But towards the close of the summer of 1810 that residence came to an end, and he returned to Keswick. Southey, practised as a critical reviewer, laid bare all the faults of the *Friend* to him; found fault with his "hair-splitting imitation of the Germans," and altogether showed more of the brother-in-law than of the friend. Mrs. Coleridge was in perpetual grief. As contributor to the newly-founded *Quarterly Review*, Southey earned more money than ever. Jeffrey, the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, to whom Coleridge had read his "Christabel," was ready to do him service; other periodicals were open to his pen; and yet, utterly crushed in spirit, and not daring to own to his wife

that the *Friend* was a failure, he went about doing nothing. On both sides there was good will, but little self-control. He had all the good and all the bad qualities of a man of imagination, especially that helpless fluidity of emotion which undermines all power of will; she, on the other hand, owned to a friend (M. Betham, *Fraser's Magazine*, 1878) how difficult it was for her to assume a cheerful countenance, and yet she knew "by sad experience that to expostulate, or even to hazard an anxious look, would soon drive him hence." The separation between them had long existed within, before taking an outward form. "The Pang more Sharp than All" is the title of a poem of about this time. And wherein did it consist? "In kindness counterfeiting absent love." As winter approached, Coleridge left the Lake country on plea of health—no falsehood!—never more to return. Wordsworth justified the step; Southey condemned it.

The relations towards his family remained amiable, although slight. There was no regular separation, only an ever-prolonged absence. Coleridge, now as before, made over to his family the entire allowance from the Wedgwoods, and was deeply concerned when Josiah Wedgwood withdrew his half in 1811, on the plea of a numerous family of his own, and also because Coleridge failed to fulfil those conditions of literary work on which the allowance had been given. Mrs. Coleridge had partly to depend on Southey's support; nor, considering the many services in his house which her

sister's health required from her, could this be considered as mere charity. Her letters to her husband preserved the same tone, and often he had not the courage to open them—he could do nothing to help! But the education of the children was not neglected. The schoolmaster at Ambleside considered it an honour to teach them in his own home, and would take no remuneration. By 1814 Hartley was old enough to be sent to the University, and friends immediately supplied the necessary funds. Later, when it came to Derwent's turn, Coleridge was doing more, and defrayed the expenses himself. Besides this, he insured his life for a thousand pounds. Gradually the healing effects of time ensued. In 1822 the wife paid a visit to the husband, and a reconciliation between them took place, though not a reunion.

He was at this time more solitary than if he had never had wife or family. And now that he was a sincere Christian and a loyal citizen, he stood in worse repute than when he had rebelled against Church and King. Just when he most admitted the supremacy of Reason, he departed most widely from her precepts, both in act and thought. In all practical matters of life he was weak and incapable to the last degree. The man and the author are not so essentially one that their personal and public doings should necessarily stand on the same level; though this would be the natural theory, did not the impartial lives of many a poet and artist too often contradict it. To all appearance Coleridge was

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a lost man, when he suddenly entered a new period of creative activity. He had nothing more to sacrifice to the demon of unsteadiness. Domestic joys and cares had departed from him; he was banished from the glories of lake and mountain, and he devoted himself the more to the philosophy of the Beautiful.

## CHAPTER VII.

IN HAMMERSMITH, AND AT CALNE. ÆSTHETIC WORKS.  
(AUTUMN OF 1810 TO SPRING OF 1816.)

“Faith asks her daily bread,  
And Fancy must be fed.”

—*The two Founts.*

With the Morgans at Hammersmith—Writing for *Courier* and *Morning Post*—Lectures on English Philosophy and Literature—Crabb Robinson—Jean Paul—Maass—Successful Lectures on Shakespeare and Milton—Schlegel’s Work on Shakespeare—Letter to Crabb Robinson—*The Times*—Second Course of Lectures on Shakespeare—Lord Byron—“Remorse”—Removal to Calne—Lectures at Bristol—Laudanum become his Bane—‘*Biographia Literaria*’—How received—“Zapolya”—Essays on the Fine Arts—Letters to Justice Fletcher on the Irish—With the Gillmans at Highgate.

GOOD people welcomed the homeless Coleridge, and watched over him like guardian angels for five years. John Morgan was the only son of a wealthy coal merchant in Bristol; a man of noble sentiments, not remarkable for intellect, but well read, modest, and universally respected. He lived in Hammersmith, then a quiet suburb of London, opened his house to the lonely man, and refused to let him go while he had a home to offer him. Mrs. Morgan, in her way, did more. Supported by her sister Charlotte, she treated the patient with that sensible and resolute kindness which enforces without

wounding. First of all, she laid her hand on the laudanum bottle; and when he protested he should die, she retorted, "Better die than live as you do." At the same time she surrounded him with the kindest care, accustomed him to order and punctuality, laid appropriate books on his table, listened sympathetically to his talk, and invited congenial guests to meet him. With returning health, his power of work also returned; his imagination craved for fresh food, and his thoughts disposed themselves for important undertakings.

In those days of Continental embargo and of the expedition to Moscow by the French, politics were the natural topics of society. Coleridge took his part, and wrote both for the *Courier* and *Morning Post*. He preached crusades against Napoleon, and prophesied as early as 23rd May, 1811, that the just-born son of the conqueror—"the babe for whose acquisition he had outraged the laws of God and man, for whose nursing he seems almost to neglect the reins of Government, will live an exile, and die an outlaw." But such writing he only practised exceptionally, and by way of earning money. His chief interest lay in æsthetic researches. Nor was there any dearth of companions with whom to converse on such subjects. We find him much at Godwin's, for whose juvenile library—how tame the old revolutionist had become!—he wanted to paraphrase Gessner's "First Navigator"; at Alston's, the American painter, whom he had seduced from Rome, and whom he honoured like another Titian; at Lamb's, who,

with his sister, had just arranged the 'Tales from Shakespeare,' and was now transformed into a Shakespearian critic; at Collier's, whose son, John Payne, was later known for his Shakespearian investigations; at Hazlitt's, who had just renounced his unsuccessful course as a painter, and had now begun—January 1812—a successful career as Lecturer on English Philosophy and Literature; and finally, at Crabb Robinson's. The last-named was an important ally. He was thoroughly versed in the German Romantic school, possessed many of their works, and became a guide for him in this respect, as he did for Carlyle twenty years later. He and young Collier took notes of Coleridge's most remarkable sayings, which serve as landmarks to the next steps of his development.

In the preceding twelve years his leaders in the science of criticism had been Lessing, Kant, Schiller and Herder. The last three now pass into the background, and even Lessing retained but small influence. Coleridge no longer needed to escape from himself, and therefore no longer required the Lethe of dry logic. He now revived, and looked eagerly round for partisans of the imaginative power. These he found in certain writings of the scholars of Kant, and of the Romantic school, who accorded to the poetic imagination a rank far higher than that of the understanding. The teaching of Kant and Schiller, which maintains that genius gives rules, instead of receiving them, led to this change.

The first work in this direction which suggested

itself to him was Jean Paul's 'Vorschule der *Æsthetik*' (1804), a book which is intellectual to whimsicality, and nowadays undeservedly forgotten. Coleridge was greatly taken with the old humorist, and wrote, December 1813, in a letter yet unpublished, to Crabb Robinson: "I should be glad to exchange almost any of my books—the philosophical works always excepted—for selections from J. P. Richter"—Mr. Crabb Robinson having then translated some specimens. In his 'Biographia Literaria' he also alludes to many a racy bit; as, for example, to the question how St. John of Nepomuc should have been the patron-saint against danger by water, when he himself had been drowned. That he was then well acquainted with the 'Vorschule' is shown by a remark made to Robinson, 29th January, 1811, that the fools played the same part towards Shakespeare's plays as Chorus did in the old Greek tragedies; for Jean Paul makes the same remark; and the same idea can hardly have occurred independently to two different men. But what he especially gathered from the 'Vorschule' was the distinction between the power of conception in the "lower sense, which is fancy, and that in the higher and creative sense, which is imagination." The one arbitrarily combines the pictures stored in the memory; the other fuses them into a whole, and thus creates new forms of its own. The one, when over-excited leads to delirium; the other, to mania (Crabb Robinson, 15th November, 1810). This distinction between



the two words, which Coleridge had not previously made, became after this the corner-stone of his theory of beauty.

A second work he now studied was 'Versuche über die Einbildungskraft,' by G. Maass (1792). He was perhaps attracted to this now little known psychologist by the admiration for Kant expressed in the Preface. At all events, he translated whole passages from him, especially his confutation of Hartley's mechanical idea of the process of thought. The result of all this was an enormous estimation of genius as compared with talent. To genius Coleridge attributed every pre-eminence of the imagination. He estimated it (17th October, 1811), almost in Jean Paul's very words, as the power which calls forth organic life, while talent is "only a piece of ingenious mechanism;" comparing the one with the eye of a man, the other with a watch. He was delighted to see how his old platonic creed of the "totality" of poetic conception was cleared and lighted up by German help. These ideas assisted him henceforth in his glorification of Shakespeare, and in his comparative condemnation of Southey and Scott, who contained too little that was philosophical and permanent for him. The Beautiful floated before him again, as years before at Christ's Hospital.

After he had been a year with the Morgans, he began another course of public lectures; this time "On Shakespeare and Milton in Illustration of the Principles

of Poetry." These showed a slight alteration in his method. But Lamb's well-known answer, on being asked by Coleridge whether he had ever heard him preach, "I never heard you do anything else," remained true. He preached still. Nor was he prepared for any contradiction to his theories, even from Shakespeare himself. "Titus Andronicus," and certain parts of "Richard III." which did not please him, he declared not to be genuine. His talk was usually a lecture, and, *vice versa*, his lecture was talk. When he mounted the rostrum he often placed some closely-written sheets before him, though he soon ceased to refer to them. He yielded rather to the mood of the moment, to the certainty of his memory, to the vivacity of his fancy; and the hearty applause of his audience showed him to be right. His friends sometimes abstracted his notes, knowing that he did best when entirely left to himself. It was not his nature to persuade his hearers, but to carry them off their feet.

It is true that many a digression from his subject had to be endured. In his sixth lecture he even went so far as to defend the practice of flogging in schools. Conservative ideas prevailed over all recollections of Boyer.

One point he advocated was to keep musical time both in the delivery of poems and of speeches, and this, by a comparison between the intellectual conditions under Elizabeth and those under Charles I., led him back to his real subject, Shakespeare. His transitions were bold and rapid, and a practised reporter com-

plained that Coleridge's perpetual surprises in the choice of his words, the construction of his sentences, and the succession of his thoughts, made his task almost impossible. Despite this, connectedness will always be found, if attention be paid, not to the details, but to the main points. His fancy often entangled the threads of his arguments, but never broke them. These lectures were conducted with far more order than those he had given three years before. From the 18th November he appeared, Mondays and Thursdays, punctually at half-past seven, in the Lecture-room of the Royal Institution; and at the conclusion of the course, he gave two or three lectures gratis, and was thus so fortunate as to exhaust his subject, for which he was doubtless indebted to the Morgans.

The contents of these lectures—of Nos. 1, 2, 6, 9, and 12—were preserved by young Mr. Collier, who followed the lecturer with his pen, and published them in 1853. Further confirmation and completion will be found in the newspapers of the day, and in Mr. Crabb Robinson's work. Coleridge commenced with a fearless attack upon the partial, shallow, uncourteous forms of criticism as they existed in the early time of the *Edinburgh Review*. He then sought to follow Shakespeare dramas chronologically, according to Malone, but was constantly tempted to dwell on the steadily ascending development of the great dramatist's art till it culminated in its highest beauty. It was a triumphal march in honour of the immortal poet, in

which Johnson, as a critic of the old common-sense school, had to play the part of the captive in chains. Coleridge even called him once "that fellow"! For Milton he had less time and enthusiasm left, and the poets of the eighteenth century were not even named. With far more decision did Coleridge now proclaim the views of the Romantic school than in 1808.

The teacher upon whom he drew throughout his eight first lectures was Jean Paul. The 'Vorschule der *Æsthetik*' defines it as the chief aim of the poet "to surround finite nature with the infinity of the Idea." Coleridge also declared that the grandest aim of poetry consists in producing not a distinct form, but a strong action of the mind; "not a mere image, but a sublime feeling of the unimaginable." As a means to this end both writers recommend the poet to let his fancy hover between sorrow and joy, tragedy and comedy, between the utmost extremes of emotion; and, as a prior condition, to remember that the poet must unite with the power of the man not only the simplicity of the child, but the childlike feeling of devout wonder. He should be not only a seer, and a prophet—that had been Coleridge's own view for twenty years,—but he was to "raise himself to the dignity of a god."

The glorification of Shakespeare was carried a step further by these doctrines. He was made to appear not only a great artist, but a rapturous mystic. His plays—enthusiastically admired on the boards, and, till

recently, there alone—were now declared to contain revelations too profound to be worthily performed. His style was defended against all censure. Wordsworth's opinion that the speech of peasants is that of poetry ('Lyrical Ballads,' 1800) was opposed by Coleridge, who contended that poetical speech should have a certain "aloofness from the language of real life." On this occasion he maintained, with Jean Paul, that passion, when given in verse, should employ stronger and more elevating words. With the aid of the 'Vorschule,' he undertook also to vindicate the punnings of Shakespeare in his youthful works, as "not only the emanation of talent but of genius; not of fashionable wit, but of something permanent." Both in the theory as in the practice of poetry, Coleridge carried to an extreme the revolt against the cool common-sense of the eighteenth century. At all events, his exaggerations had the merit of teaching a deeper insight into Shakespeare's real worth.

This was the substance of his first eight lectures. Shortly after the delivery of the eighth, and through Crabb Robinson's intervention, Coleridge made acquaintance with another German work on æsthetic subjects, which deeply impressed him—'Lectures on Dramatic Literature and Art,' by August Wilhelm von Schlegel, delivered in 1808, printed in 1809-11. In spite of the closed state of the Continent, this work reached him, and when he next addressed his audience he announced his entire agreement with the opinions of

the writer, though without mentioning Schlegel's name. This is accounted for by the fact that both Schlegel and himself had gone to school with the same master. "I should have praised the book the more, were it not that in so doing I should in a manner have praised myself." A private letter to Crabb Robinson speaks more openly. "If all the comments that have been written on Shakespeare by his editors could have been collected into a pile and set on fire, that by the blaze Schlegel might have written his lectures, the world would have been equally a gainer by the books destroyed as by the book written."

Accordingly, in the ninth lecture Schlegel's direct influence appears. Shakespeare is compared with the ancient dramatists, not as their imitator, but as a poet of a totally different order. The ancients worked like sculptors; few characters, and those abstract in feature. Shakespeare arranged his with all the harmonious abundance of the painter. He brings portraits of individuals before us, and yet lifts us over time and space into the regions of fancy. The ancients followed a mechanical regularity; Shakespeare an organic one. Schlegel had expressed this, especially in his third volume, and Coleridge, who had long guessed the same, now spoke it freely out. But Schlegel applied the term "romantic" both to the poetry of the Middle Ages and to that of the Renaissance, while Coleridge hesitated for a time to baptize his favourite poet after himself. Both further developed their poetic ideal upon the example of the

“Midsummer Night’s Dream.” Both denied to the ancients the power of artistic individuality, and both ventured at most to place Dante and Milton by the side of Shakespeare. Both also showed that Shakespeare was far better appreciated in his own time than by the arrogant critics of the French Classic school—“Monkeys, shaped like men,” as Coleridge called them. How far he adhered to his new teacher in the remainder of the course is, owing to defective reports, not ascertainable.

No great result of these lectures had been expected by Coleridge. On November 6th, 1811, he reduced the entrance price from three guineas to two, and begged Crabb Robinson in a very modest letter to intercede with Walter—the editor of the *Times*—for a short notice. This being refused, he once more applied, and almost beseechingly, to Crabb Robinson—on the first day—to attract the notice of the public by some early notice. Both these letters, hitherto unprinted, are in the Robinson papers in Dr. Williams’s library, London. The last of the two begins with a circumstantial account of his state of health, then continues with an over-conscientious anxiety as follows :

“MY DEAR ROBINSON,—

. . . “A digression this was; and now to business. Stuart seems to wonder at Walter’s making anything of a favour of inserting in to-morrow’s *Times* an account of the Lecture, at this dead time of the year; and added, that if a birthday entertainment had

permitted him to be present, he would have written a paragraph of twenty or thirty lines, sent it to Walter with his compliments, and should have been surprised, as at a mark of unusual discourtesy, if it had not been inserted, there being nothing political or personal in the subject. Much more than to me, who have always thought and written in the same tone of feeling with the *Times*, and when the chief writer in it has sometimes quoted and very often written in the exact spirit of Wordsworth's pamphlet, and twice quoted sentences which I myself wrote. The only prose essay I have, I fully determined to send to Mr. Walter when I had polished the style a little, merely as a mark of my high esteem for a paper which I not only think incomparably the best Journal that is, or has been, in Great Britain, but the only one which without impudence can dare call itself independent or impartial; and this I assuredly shall do still, because the compliment was intended to the *Times* itself, and was not personal. But yet I do not like the notion of chaffering a work of my most serious thoughts and of my inmost convictions against a compliment or disguised advertisement, for the sake of *money*—though this is perfect purity to my feeling compared to doing it from vanity. Heaven knows! I never feel my poverty so painful as when I see my name and a puff tacked to it, and know that I knew it beforehand, my poverty and not my will consenting.

“I am convinced, my dear R., you will do all you



can for me. After the lecture, write about twenty lines' notice that it was not in etymological severity a lecture ; for though the reasoning, the arrangement, the etceteras bore the clearest marks of long premeditation, yet the language, illustrations, etc., were evidently the children of the moment—in short, what strikes yourself. A precious recipe for a puff! Oh, Jesus! embarrassment, like misery, makes us bedfellows with strange meanesses ; but that my soul will not allow herself to be so reviled, I should have said businesses.

“ This paragraph should be in to-morrow's *Times*, or not at all. Doubtless it would be of the greatest service to me. I brought my essay with me, and, if you wish, will give it you, rude as it is, at the lecture. God bless you.

“ S. T. C.

“ 18th November, 1811.”

Crabb Robinson got the desired notice into the *Times*. But all fear of the indifference of the public was unfounded. The novelty of the thoughts to an English ear, their magical charm, perhaps their brilliant one-sidedness, and, not least, the happy patriotic moment for the glorification of the great national bard at a time when the country was engaged in war and conquest—all this combined to produce an unforeseen success. The *Times*, *Morning Post*, and *Dublin Correspondent* contended with each other in announcing the other lectures. Every drawing-room in London discussed them. On the 30th January came even Lord Byron—then just about to publish “ Childe Harold ”—

accompanied by Rogers, and stood muffled up in the background, "to hear the new art of poetry by the reformed schismatic"—a two-edged hit at what Coleridge had said against Wordsworth's theory of the rustic style. The last evening—27th February—was a regular festival; the hall crowded, the audience enthusiastic, and the receipts as considerable as they were needful.

So profitable a mine was worth working again. On the 19th of May, 1812, Coleridge commenced another course—on Shakespeare again—with a general introduction upon the history of poetry. Unfortunately, the contents only of the first four lectures have been preserved to us by Crabb Robinson. They treated of the ancient drama, and of its distinction from the Romantic school. Coleridge meanwhile had become more versed in his subject, and used the German terms. His syllabus was probably taken from the essays, "Greek Drama" and "Progress of the Drama," published later by his daughter, with other matter, as "Notes and Lectures," and which she owns were a mere fresh working up of the chapter in question by Schlegel. Whether it was this want of independence in conception, or the less attractive locality of Willis's Rooms, or a less happy mood on the part of the lecturer, it would be difficult to say; or because ladies, especially, were absent; certainly he was not so successful. For all that, he began a fourth course in the December of the same year; the syllabus for which exists among Mr. Robinson's papers, but

is too long to introduce here. Altogether it was fortunate for Coleridge that he had found a rich store of materials in Germany of which his hearers—Mr. Robinson excepted—knew just nothing. Even in his second series of lectures he had repeated many an observation from the first. In these last he seems to have crowded together all he had ever gathered from all his different teachers. Still, he had not lost his popularity with his audience, who welcomed him on the last evening with three cheers.

These lectures brought him in addition many an indirect advantage. The attention of the reading public was now for the first time attracted to his earlier works. The *Friend* became much in demand, and his poems were quite bought up. Even Byron, passionately as he had abused the mixture of bombast and childishness in the young Coleridge in his 'English Bards and Scottish Reviewers,' and much as he was opposed to the conservative opinions and abstract style of the now older Coleridge, yet could no longer refuse him his respect. From a hot adversary he became a warm patron. He called on him, got him to read his "Kubla Khan" aloud to him, regretted his expressions in the satire above mentioned, excusing them on the plea of his youth at that time, and of his irritability. He praised "Christabel" in a remark in the "Siege of Corinth"—of course without acknowledging his obligations to that poem, as indeed poets, in such cases, generally neglect to do. He urged Cole-

ridge also to bring this *chef-d'œuvre* before the public, and procured him the services of Mr. Murray as a publisher. The greatest satisfaction, however, for the long-neglected man was the readiness with which the manager of Drury Lane now came forward. At first our author was requested to write light melodramas for the stage, and went the length of borrowing Goethe's plays from Crabb Robinson. Then the manager decided to bring forward the tragedy of "Osorio," which, ever since Sheridan's contemptuous rejection, had lain unnoticed; and in fact Coleridge was granted the pleasure—on the 23rd January, 1813—of seeing the characters of his youthful piece put into living action in the presence of a full house.

Coleridge had worked hard for this success. True to his self-criticism at Göttingen, he transposed the scene between the returned lover and his confidant, placing it at the beginning, and thus made the introductory story clear. The villain is also no longer led off from the scene, but is made, with dramatic effect, to die on the boards. He now also curtailed the episode of the Moors, bringing forward the lover portions the more prominently, after the example of Max and Thecla in "Wallenstein," from which he borrowed a passage almost literally ("Wallenstein's Tod," IV. 5). In order also to adapt the piece to the political events of the day, he made the good brother fulminate against the oppressor of the national liberty, as if he were just come from the battle of Leipsic. In the

concluding scene the old father performs the always touching and welcome *rôle* of embracing and blessing the rescued lovers. The description of the Inquisition was carefully revised, so as to disarm all criticism by any Spanish student. Finally, the original title "Osorio" was changed for that of "Remorse." Thus the tragedy found its way on to the boards, introduced by a sprightly prologue by Lamb, and brought its author well-merited applause. Byron especially was satisfied; "For many years," he said, "we have had nothing remarkable in the way of Remorse." The piece ran for twenty nights, and on Coleridge's appearing one evening in the actors' box, the whole pit rose and clapped him—an honour which, since the time of Voltaire, had been paid to no dramatist in London. The profits also amounted to three times as much as for all his previous works put together.

With this his sphere of activity and his stay in London came to an end. Circumstances now obliged Morgan to quit Hammersmith, and retire to a small house at Calne, in Wiltshire. This took place in the spring of 1813. Coleridge accompanied the family for three years.

Calne was not so picturesque as Keswick—not even as Stowey. It is an irregular little town of 3000 inhabitants, surrounded with chalky fields and gentle hills, without any trees of importance. Still, there were many strips of wild heath land, varied with hedgerows and copse, and enriched with many a

prosperous farm. The inhabitants were civil, and a strolling band of players even performed "Remorse" there. In the neighbouring living of Bremhill, his old friend Bowles was incumbent—now more devoted to the theory than to the practice of poetry. Coleridge's son Hartley visited him in the autumn of 1814, and spent his first college vacation with his father. Mr. Morgan was always ready to write from his friend's dictation; and of rheumatism we hear little. It was a most favourable place for quiet literary work, and here Coleridge was destined to reach his latest stage of development in æsthetic thought.

Through his friend Robinson, who had heard Schelling lecture in Jena, and had supped with him, Coleridge had become acquainted with the successors of Kant. He had extolled Schiller's "Dreams of a Ghostseer," and had promised to translate his treatise, "Über das Schöne und Erhabene"—naturally, only promised. He had warmly commended Jacobi's work on Spinoza, pronounced Fichte to be a great logician, and Schelling "perhaps a greater man still." But Kant still took precedence of all. Now, however, in the retirement of Calne, he first fell under the influence of Schelling—the one platonist among Kant's followers. In December 1813, he besought Crabb Robinson (in an unpublished letter) to procure him Fichte's *Niet-hammer-Fichte Magazine*, in which Schelling first came forward independently, and also his essay, "Über die Methode des Academischen Studiums." How deeply

he plunged into Schelling at that time is shown by his own marginal comments in Mr. Robinson's 'Spinoza,' now preserved in University College Hall—hitherto almost unknown.

For all purposes of lecturing—our author's best literary resource—Calne offered too limited an audience. Bristol was his nearest theatre; and here, on the 28th October, 1813, he commenced another course on Shakespeare—or rather, a popular *réchauffé* of his London lectures. They were well reported in the *Bristol Gazette*, and procured him the applause both of old and new admirers. But the interest they created was more personal than general. A second series, on Milton, which he delivered the following April, were so scantily attended as hardly to pay the expenses. In addition to this, Coleridge soon found out that without the control of the Morgans he fell more and more into his old unpunctual ways, and under the tyranny of the laudanum bottle, the banefulness of which he now with terror acknowledged. So he remained in Calne, and began his three essays "On the Fine Arts," published in Hartley's *Bristol Journal*. Napoleon was now a prisoner at Elba; Europe seemed at peace; and the readers of the newspapers seemed to be sufficiently starved to bear, if not to relish, the cogitations of Schelling.

Coleridge placed himself in decided opposition to those views on the theory of the Beautiful generally held by his countrymen; to the old school of the

Sensualists, as well as to the new theory which had been founded by Alison's work on the 'Nature and Principles of Taste,' in 1810, and which had been defended by Jeffrey in the *Edinburgh Review*; namely, that the impression of the Beautiful was produced by various extrinsic associations. Against the one he quoted Kant's distinction of the Beautiful from the Agreeable, and this with such close adherence to the often mentioned 'Kritik der Urtheilskraft,' that he even gave the instance of the Iroquois Indian, who admired the "cook-shops" in Paris more than anything else. Against the other he applied that distinction between the Beautiful and the Good which in Kant immediately follows. Milton, from a puritan point of view, may have deemed the Cathedral of York useless, and popish, and yet have taken pleasure in its beauty. The pearl is the disease as well as the ornament of the oyster; while, *vice versâ*, an awkward posture in the portrait of a friend may recall pleasing memories of him, without being beautiful.

At the end of these essays he gave the reader to understand, that as regarded the relation of the artist to the absolutely Good he had further disclosures to make, entitled to the highest respect, which he reserved "for a loftier mood, a nobler subject, and a more appropriate audience." Instead of appearing in a weekly journal, these deserved rather a book to themselves, and one of an autobiographical kind; for, like Schelling, he repeatedly asserts that these doctrines are far more to be gathered from the inner sense than from outer



proof; that they must arise from the depths of the poet's soul, as in Coleridge himself they had in fact arisen. Hence arose his 'Biographia Literaria.'

Without his usual roundabout ways and preparations, even without consulting his friends, he now commenced that work which became his most profound achievement in prose. Southey, who shortly before had in vain sought to enlist his help for his motley and rather superficial collection of anecdotes and fragments, 'Omnia'—(Coleridge furnished only a few insignificant contributions),—now complained to Cottle (April 1814) of his indefensible indolence. Meanwhile the culprit sat at his writing-table from 11 to 4 and from 6 to 10, absorbed in his task, and not even allowing himself the relaxation of letter-writing. What was to have been the Introduction to a literary autobiography now grew under his hand into two volumes, in which he at last fulfilled the promise made in the *Friend*, namely, that of reconciling art and religion. By the 29th July, 1815, he was ready, all but the Introduction; in the course of that year the greater part was printed, and only the fact that the original publisher, Gutch of Bristol, made the work over to the firm of Rest, Fenner & Curtis, in London, delayed its appearance till 1817.

Whoever would read the 'Biographia Literaria' without false expectations, must keep the second part in view, called, 'Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions.' By its emphasis upon the latter, it departed altogether from the traditions of English

memoirs. And yet this departure was both natural and justifiable; for did not Coleridge devote his whole life, in a most un-English fashion, to thought as an end in itself, without any practical end in view? Simply to tell his story seemed to him the best way to vindicate the views he held. "Intelligence," he says, in the twelfth chapter, "is a self-development, not a quality attached to a substance." In this deeply individual trait lies the value of the work, which, without any doctrinaire obtrusiveness, offers a wealth of suggestions—and, it is true, their weak side as well. And these, in addition, were accompanied by such histories of experiences, such a number of apologies, such judgments upon friend and foe, and such warnings to youth, &c., that the first perusal readily gives the impression of utter disorder. In truth the whole must be read several times in order to trace the straight line through all the flourishes.

In the first volume the essence of the Beautiful is generally discussed. Coleridge shows how, from his youth onward, he was opposed to the mechanical rhetoric of the pseudo-classic poets; how he came to feel, with Wordsworth and Southey, the mere caprice of the leading reviewers; and that the only means to stem this double mischief was to lay down "fixed canons of criticism, previously established and deduced from the nature of man." For this end Hartley's researches into the association of ideas first seemed to offer a fit solution but he soon felt that

only a blind mechanism would be the result. He turned therefore to the idealists, and worked his way through Spinoza and the mystics, through a martyrdom of personal disappointments and journalistic miseries, up to Kant, and, as the highest point, to Schelling after him. How closely he approaches to the decisions of Schelling in that philosopher's work on 'Transcendental Ideality' has been pointed out by Sara Coleridge in her remarks in the second edition of the 'Biographia Literaria' (1847). Coleridge has only the merit of having formally recast Schelling's ideas and permeated them with new elements.

In the second part (from ch. 14) this definition of the Beautiful is developed somewhat more practically, and illustrated with examples. The part of the poet is to bring the extremest qualities into harmony, the Typical and the Individual, Agitation and Order, familiar objects and the freshness of a first impression; Nature and Art. This was the intention both of Wordsworth and our author in their 'Lyrical Ballads,' and this was what the poets of the Renaissance did accomplish; for instance, Shakespeare in "Venus and Adonis," and in "Lucrece." Wordsworth did the same in his poems, although in his preface to the 'Lyrical Ballads' his defence of a homely and realistic form of language upheld a wrong theory. And here Coleridge begins to extol his friend as a Poet while correcting his æsthetic theory. He shows that Wordsworth walked on step by step by the very force of his genius

in opposition to his own creed. Thus terminates the programme of the so-called Lake school, even on its critical side. From that moment neither Wordsworth nor Coleridge laid down any essentially new standards, nor did Southey or Lloyd ever devote themselves to any severe labour of thought.

At this part (ch. 22) Coleridge ought to have concluded his work. What he added to it in 1817 has no connection with the rest. It consists of a few letters written from Germany in 1798 (first printed in the *Courier*, 1816); a severe notice of the drama called "Bertram," represented in 1816—a sort of Don Juan tragedy by Byron's eccentric friend Maturin—which, to the view of our moral æsthetician, was a pattern of Jacobinical lawlessness; and lastly, of a pious lament over various literary failures and disasters which happened to himself at about this time, concluding with an apostrophe to the great "I am." He already displayed that oracular-theological spirit which characterised the works of his last period.

The reception accorded to this work was the worst that can be conceived. It was impossible for Wordsworth to agree with it—that, Coleridge knew beforehand. The ever-steadfast friend, however, understood that it had been dictated by an inward sense of duty, and refrained from all public expression; Lamb, in a letter to Wordsworth (1819), writes: "C. is very foolish to scribble on books." Byron was indignant at the attack on Maturin, and replied to it in "Don Juan" with

broadsides of ridicule. The Liberal papers, from political reasons, spat out venom and gall. The *Monthly Review* took malicious pleasure in showing how Coleridge by his criticism on Wordsworth had thrown over his own school, and regretted only that Wordsworth, "the greatest piece of folly and arrogance . . . which has disgraced the present *prodigious* æra of our poetical literature," should still carry off so much praise. The new-founded *Blackwood's Magazine* pronounced the work to be "most execrable, treating the most ordinary commonplaces so as to give them the air of mysteries;" that Coleridge himself was "nothing but a fantastic braggadocio, full of self-admiration, with little feeling and no judgment;" that he contradicted himself, showed no real comprehension of Kant, and that his distinction between the imagination and the fancy was a laughable performance. The *Edinburgh Review* looked upon all speculation as hair-splitting nonsense, called him a bad philosopher and a worse politician, picked out all the biographical part, turned it into derision, in order to say at the end, "See the contradictions and follies of your reformed anti-Jacobin poet!" His adversaries were as active as clever in showing up all the weak parts of the work, and his Conservative friends remained silent! The *Quarterly Review* had been founded in great measure in opposition to the *Edinburgh Review*, and Southey, its chief contributor, had been praised in the 'Biographia,' but not a word was uttered in its defence. None of the attacks gave Coleridge such pain as this absence of all

support from the old friend; the more so as Coleridge had, of his own free will, written in the *Courier* a long and warm rejoinder on Southey's account, to the critics who openly taunted him with his youthful communistic drama "Wat Tyler." Only an anonymous writer, who signed himself "J. S.," had the courage to send a remonstrance to the editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, to the effect that he had succeeded in imitating the worst style of the *Edinburgh Review*. Certainly it was not wise to bring such a complicated and nebulous system before the countrymen of Newton and Locke, and in so dull a form.

After finishing the 'Biographia,' or perhaps while still engaged on it, Coleridge wrote a drama entitled "Zapolya," in which these æsthetic conceptions also found vent. He was urged by Byron, as well as encouraged by the success of his "Remorse," to try his hand again in a dramatic form; and since the Muse, as he himself confessed, was sparing of inspiration, he made it partially the vehicle for his favourite forms of reflection. Schelling, Shakespeare, the "Robbers," Wallenstein, and the latest political events were enlisted; and though the plot is more fabulous in character still than "Remorse," yet a didactic vein runs through it almost as conspicuously as in his early "Fall of Robespierre."

Such mixtures of fancy, philosophy and politics were in those disturbed days more in vogue than now. Both Napoleon and Prometheus, for instance, figured largely in Byron's contemporary poems. The only way to

neutralise the prosaic impression such mixtures were calculated to produce was by the introduction of the most romantic accessories. Coleridge borrowed profusely, not only, as he admits, from "The Winter's Tale," but from "As You Like It." He took the Forest of Ardennes for his background, made his fugitives play hide-and-seek in it, put soft utterances on the transitoriness of love into their mouths, and brought heroine and clown into awful entanglements. He borrowed also from the "Tempest" the dread of "mooncalves" and the belief in friendly spirits of the air; nor is the extravagant fable which is interwoven without poetic intention. For the rest, the piece, with its sylvan atmosphere and spirit machinery, its rugged contrasts of innocence and vice, with its songs, and other features, reminds us of the "Freischutz," which at about this time occupied the boards in Germany; and "Zapolya" might perhaps have succeeded if the author had better understood the nature of opera. It is as such, rather than as a poetic history, that it ought to be, and has been, understood. The readers for Drury Lane declined it; the metaphysical tendency now currently imputed to the author was made the excuse, and the frequenters of the theatre were left to entertainments of the then usually trivial and empty kind. But the reading public did justice to the author. The first edition no sooner appeared (1817) than it was caught up. Within six weeks 2000 copies were sold. Walter Scott, in his "Peveril of the Peak,"

borrowed from it (*Quarterly Review*, 1834, p. 27). Even the press spontaneously praised it as the "tenderest" work Coleridge had produced. "If it is too unimpassioned and too obscure," said *Scott's Magazine*, "it is still a beautiful poem."

A book of two volumes and a drama in four acts, with a prologue, was work enough for the three years which Coleridge spent at Calne. But he was not satisfied. It appears from the third essay "On the Fine Arts" that he had commenced a large volume on 'The Logos, or the Communicative Intelligence in Nature and in Man, which, from various indications in the 'Biographia,' was to have divulged and demonstrated the whole depth of Schelling's mystical system. This often-promised work, which Coleridge flattered himself would be ready in 1814 never saw fulfilment. He continued also his contributions to periodicals, and wrote now and then leading articles in the Government organs. He did these, it is true, principally for the sake of pay. Now that Napoleon was fallen, he found little more to desire or to say in the way of politics; still, he did not give up an atom of his convictions and independence, and on occasions when his articles censured the mistakes of the ministers, he would leave them unprinted rather than alter them. The six letters to Mr. Justice Fletcher in the *Courier*—towards the end of 1814—upon the freedom of the Catholic Irish, are specimens in question. His old feeling for the oppressed inhabitants of the Green Isle is here curiously interwoven with his dislike to all popular



rule, and with the strongest aversion to the Roman Catholic Church, as a State within the State—both showing how little even the personal kindness of the Pope, which had probably saved his life, availed to change the principle on which his opinions were founded. He also composed a hymn to the Creator, which shows more piety than poetic power, and planned “a series of odes to the different sentences of the Lord’s Prayer,” which, however, were never written; for he wrote to Cottle, 10th March, 1815: “I cannot, as is feigned of the nightingale, sing, with my breast against a thorn.” Nor did the joyfulness of youth return, even with the improvement in his outer circumstances. At this time he undertook a fresh edition of his collective poems under the title of ‘Sibylline Leaves,’ which he polished and smoothed more than altogether desirable. He also inserted certain philosophical verses—for instance, the “Eolian Harp,” 30-35—which had been better away. His industry was occasionally even harmful.

And now, by no fault of his own, he had, at the beginning of 1816, to leave the home at Calne. Mr. Morgan’s means were too much reduced, and though Coleridge contributed amply his share, he could not remain with the family. Well knowing his own infirmity, he determined not to trust himself alone. Many reasons banished him from Keswick, where his wife and daughter still resided. At one time he even thought of entering a private lunatic asylum (Cottle, p. 368), in itself a proof of his disordered mind. In his perplexity, he went to London, where he immediately fell under the

tyranny of his enemy, and became ill. Upon this, his medical attendant, Dr. Adams, took a remarkable step, and stated the case to Mr. Gillman, a medical man, who occupied a quiet residence with a garden at Highgate. The name of the patient was not given; only his miserable sufferings, his intellectual character, and his determination to submit for a time to the control of a doctor. Mr. Gillman was in good circumstances, happily married, and felt no inclination for an inmate—wondering not a little at so bold a proposal on the part of a fellow-practitioner whom he knew but little. Still, out of compassion, he permitted a call from the patient. Coleridge accordingly called—it was the evening of the 10th April, 1816—and the refinement of his manner, the spell of his talk, and the repute of his name, vanquished the Gillmans at once. From that time he became the inmate and friend of the family, and remained so till his end.

In London, in the centre of the smoky, roaring City, he had, properly speaking, begun his life; and in the precincts of the great metropolis, finely situated above it, he was now anchored in peace. At heart he was not much less of a boy, nor outwardly much less of an orphan, than when he wore the blue coat and yellow stockings; but thirty-six years of ripening and enlightening trials lay between. Once more a kind and quiet refuge was opened to him. In life, as in thought, he had been driven by roundabout roads back to near his starting-point, but the road had always tended upwards. Schelling's inward culture was now not only his theory, but his experience.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## AT HIGHGATE. THEOLOGY. (1816-1834.)

“Life is but thought.”—*Youth and Age*.

Highgate—Happy Life with Gillmans—Numerous Visitors—Public Respect for Him—Reconciled to the Church—‘Lay Sermons’—Second Edition of *Friend*—Publication of “Christabel”—Bankruptcy of Fenner—Letter to Judge Coleridge—Seventh Course of Lectures—“Essay on Beauty”—Royal Literary Society—Tieck—‘Aids to Reflection’—Irving—Basil Montague—His “Confessions”—‘On Constitution of Church and State’—‘History of Jestes of Maxilian, Satyrane’s Cousin’—His own Epitaph—Death—High Estimate of Him—Accusations of Plagiarism—Summary of Character.

THE Gillmans gave our poet a more luxurious refuge at Highgate than he had had with the kind Morgans at Hammersmith. They had a portion of the roof raised in order to gain a room where he could place his great book-chests and work undisturbed. His windows overlooked—and overlook still—a beautiful view of the Nightingale Valley, with the green heights behind, the shady walks and half-hidden villas of Hampstead. In the depth to the left lies the great metropolis—through the smoky cloud of which many a soaring tower is visible; while the sky spreads forth all the rich colours of the Western sun. The Gillmans’ manner towards him was all that was sensible and hearty. Their

granddaughter, Mrs. Henry Watson (St. Leonard's Vicarage, Tring), who admitted me with utmost kindness to the family traditions, possesses portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Gillman—he with brown eyes and hair, and manly expression ; she, a pretty blonde, with rosy cheeks and blue eyes. It is easy to understand that with these good people Coleridge felt himself at home for sixteen long years. Mr. Gillman had an extensive practice ; still, he found time to enter gladly and eagerly into the philosophical discussions of his guest. Before this he had written, in a professional way, 'A Dissertation on the Bite of a Rabid Animal ; being the substance of an essay which received a prize from the Royal College of Surgeons.' (London, 1812.) Now he turned to Schelling's comprehensive speculations, and worked out, with the help of Coleridge, a 'Theory of Life' (printed 1848), seeking in it an idea of life capable of being enrolled in the sphere of natural science. Mrs. Gillman was a good listener, but first and foremost she was an excellent manager ; their servants remained with them for years. She was proud of ministering to the comfort and happiness of the celebrated and much-to-be-pitied poet : nor did she forget the ornaments of life, and had always some of his favourite plants—geraniums and myrtles—in his room. No opium entered the house unless prescribed by the doctor for very severe pains. On the other hand, relations and friends were welcomed at all times. Mrs. Coleridge came for Christmas 1822, and after that, maintained a confidential correspondence

with Mrs. Gillman—in so far an advantage to her husband, who when he did venture to open her letters, was usually dispirited for days. Lamb dined with them almost every Sunday. Strangers also, from all parts, anxious to know Coleridge, were readily introduced. It would take long to enumerate the names of those who sought him; from that of Emerson, the brilliant American essayist, to that of Joseph Green, the celebrated surgeon, who acted almost the part of an amanuensis; from Hookham Frere, the refined ex-minister, and Byron's humorous precursor, to the naïve and often over-enthusiastic Thomas Allsop, who would willingly have played the part of a Boswell if he had had the talent for it. Dressed all in black, as he moved through house and garden, Coleridge might have been taken for a clergyman. He shared his breakfast with the birds, and his knowledge with his friends, without greatly concerning himself about either class of guest. On being asked by Gillman's son for help in a school exercise, he was known to give him a lecture an hour long on the profoundest principles of the subject, beginning from our first parents, till the boy took care not to apply to him again. He would still also from time to time discourse so enchantingly, that the whole circle of visitors sat silent, and hung more or less bewitched on his words. The trembling of his limbs, it is true, did not cease; his gait remained unsteady, and the habit of walking first on one side of his companion, and then on the other, which Hazlitt had remarked even at Stowey, never left

him. But the tottering limbs became rounder, the large grey eye and full lips retained a childlike expression, and his luxuriant white hair was like a crown of honour. Wherever he appeared, whether in the flowery fields or woods of Highgate, old and young took off their hats. It is well known how Keats—already with the seeds of consumption in him—addressed him on such an occasion with gushing veneration, and asked to be allowed to press his hand. Coleridge never quitted this refuge for long. He went regularly every summer for a few weeks to the nearest seaside—Ramsgate—and once, in 1828, when the Gillmans were in Paris, he accompanied Wordsworth on a visit of three weeks to the Rhine. Otherwise he remained faithful to his beautiful Highgate, where the clock of the Gothic church struck the hours of his increasing age, and where he lived to the last in dignified leisure.

The worship of Shakespeare might now have been resumed, as before in Hammersmith. But the study of Schelling had led Coleridge to that point where æsthetics and theology meet; public affairs had also taken a turn which seemed to demand religious rather than political zeal. Napoleon, as we have said, was safe at St. Helena, the peace of the world restored, and the English army covered with laurels; but an internal foe now arose not to be met with bayonets. Machinery, steamboats, and factories had sprung up. More wares were produced with fewer workmen, at first, than before. Foreign nations also resumed the arts of peace, and to a

certain extent supplied their own markets. Wages sank and demand declined; the 'hands' became discontented, the more so as the spiritless service of the machines reduced them to little more than machines in turn. There were riots and disturbances. In the retirement of Calne, Coleridge had heard little about these things; but here, close to London, and in the house of a medical man, who told the tale of many a poor patient treated gratis by him, he could not avoid looking the social Mænad in the face. He saw with deepest sympathy that the condition of young children in the factories was more pitiable than that of the negro slave, the purchase and sale of whom had been already (1807) prohibited. Involuntarily he looked round for a remedy, and found none but that which he had advocated from the beginning of his political activity, namely, genuine Christianity.

But this was a different kind of Christianity from that which he had once preached in the Corn Hall at Bristol. In that revolutionary time he was all for individual creeds; now he was for that of the Church. At that time he had thundered against the powerful prelates, the well-paid priests of that "Babylonian woman" the State Church. Now he was reconciled to all these things, and indeed was proud of the uninterrupted Apostolic descent of the Anglican episcopacy. He had convinced himself that the English Church, by its faith in tradition, and by the character of its service, had exactly taken the happy medium between Protestantism and Rome, and in his

'Biographia Literaria' he hailed her with his famous "*Esto perpetua.*" In spiritual as in domestic matters he had submitted himself to her guardianship; and as it was well with himself under these conditions, he wished the same to all. Political economy was for him another name for humbug. Adam Smith and Malthus were hateful to him as representatives of short-sighted common-sense; his ideas all centred in the laws of Christianity, and these he set forth in two 'Lay Sermons,' written at the suggestion of his publisher Fenner, soon after his arrival in Highgate.

The first of these sermons is addressed to "the higher classes of society," the second to "the higher and middle classes;" the third was at all events intended for the lower classes, true to the text, "Blessed are ye, who sow beside all waters." Rich and poor alike are admonished to love their neighbour, and to look for no help from the State, but only from practical faith. A greater respect for high rank might even be desired, he said, as a counteraction to the worship of the golden calf. The people ought to learn to think philosophically, and not merely as partisans; all lotteries were to be banished; and where, finally, nothing seemed to help, we were to console others and trust in God. The detestable thirst for money and enjoyment was to be met by an elevated frame of mind; the "wealth of nations," by the welfare of nations; the sceptical statesmen of the eighteenth century, by the believing ones of the seventeenth century, such as Milton, Jeremy Taylor, Sidney and Donne.



It was thus that our romantic poet struggled to put old wine into new bottles.

It was not society alone, but knowledge also which Coleridge wished to found on religion. This great second stage in his mental history is dated by the new edition of his *Friend*. This was commenced in Calne, carried on in 1817, and appeared in 1818. The already existing numbers of the unfortunate old periodical underwent certain alterations; such autobiographical passages as occurred in the 'Biographia' had become superfluous and were omitted. Many a proposition required clearer definition, and was enlarged into a treatise; political allusions were modernised; entertaining parts were called "landing-places"; edifying parts collected in essays, and the whole turned into a book. A new section was also added, entitled, "Grounds of Morality and Religion."

Meanwhile one misfortune after another contributed to bring Coleridge down from his speculations in the clouds. For years he had reaped great applause from his readings of "Christabel"; scarcely was it printed (1816)—an anonymous hand having already written no contemptible termination to it in the *European Magazine* a year before\*—than it was assailed by the reviewers with sneers and ridicule. The *Monthly Review* called it whimsical without genius, wild without taste, and wondered that "such rude unfashionable stuff" should have attracted the admiration of Byron. The *Edinburgh*

\* Martin Farquhar Tupper.

*Review* treated it more roughly. They were also astonished that Byron could recommend such a piece of twaddling coxcombery, and only saw in the ballad "one of the most notable pieces of impertinence of which the press has been lately guilty." Who the amiable reviewer might be is of secondary importance. Coleridge believed him to be Jeffrey, and complained of such treatment in the last chapter of the 'Biographia,' and the more bitterly because a few years before, at Keswick, Jeffrey had highly praised the work. We know, however, accidentally (Dibdin, p. 340) that no other than the celebrated author of the 'Irish Melodies,' Tom Moore, was the author. At all events, this review greatly injured Coleridge, for though the ballad reached a second edition in the same year, Mr. Murray, the only good publisher he had had since Cottle's retirement, withdrew his hand from him.

The result was that Coleridge entered into an engagement with another publisher, who took advantage of his good-nature to cheat him. On the recommendation of a Rev. Mr. Curtis—a worthless character—he entrusted (1816) to the firm of Fenner the following works:—The 'Biographia Literaria,' "Zapolya," the 'Sibylline Leaves,' the 'Lay Sermons,' the new edition of the *Friend*, and the "Essay on Method." In 1817 Fenner became bankrupt, and Coleridge—like Walter Scott soon after—not only lost all his profits, but was charged with considerable debts. Whether with or without publisher, he was sure to lose the reward of his

labours. He relates the whole story in an hitherto unpublished letter to his nephew Judge Coleridge, kindly furnished to me by the son of the same, the present Lord Chief Justice Coleridge.

“8th May, 1825.

“MY VERY DEAR NEPHEW,— Grove, Highgate.

“When, between eight and nine years ago, I came from Calne to London with the ill-starred ‘Zapolya’—written *Musis et Apolline nullo* for the theatre at Lord Byron’s instance—I had from change of diet, over-excitement, agitating anxieties on poor Morgan’s account, and, to seal all, indiscreet attempts to stave off a coming evil—*i.e.*, to keep up the strength or rather power of my spirits and animal motion, and so defer the inevitable ebb and dead low water—I had from all these causes a fit of sickness which confined me to bed for about three weeks. My object was to come to some settlement and certainty with regard to pecuniary matters by means of the play (‘Zapolya’), my ‘Biographia Literaria,’ ‘Sibylline Leaves’ (then printed but not published), and the *rifacciamento* of the *Friend* (as it now is). This sickness in its consequences led to my settlement at Highgate with Mr. Gillman, originally intended for no more than three months, but which in common probability will only end with my life, or (which God forbid!) with their lives. Look! While yet in London (Norfolk Street, Strand), and in the first days of my convalescence, Mr. Murray called on me in consequence of some flashes of praise which Lord Byron had uttered respecting the fragment of the

'Christabel.' Murray urged me to publish it, and offered me eighty guineas, or pounds. The publication was utterly against my feelings and my judgment. But poor Morgan's necessities, including *his wife and his sister*, were urgent and clamorous, and I never yet possessed even a decent quantity of fortitude in withstanding distress in the favour of persons who, I had reason to think, loved me, and who in better days (or rather what they themselves had mistaken for such) had manifested attachment to me and mine. With many a pang and many a groan—when I could groan unheard—I concluded the bargain, and gave the £80 to Morgan, who was already debtor, rather than creditor, on all former accounts of board, &c. It was likewise understood by me that Mr. Murray was to be my publisher for my works generally. The sale of the 'Christabel' sadly disappointed him. It was abused and ridiculed by the *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly* refused even to mention it. Sir W. Scott *might* have served me if he had at that time said only *one half* of what he has since avowed in large companies, as at Sir George Beaumont's, Mr. Rogers', Mr. Sotheby's, &c., all, however, persons who knew the fact almost as well as Sir Walter himself. In this mood Mr. Murray expressed himself in such words as led me, nervous and imperfectly recovered as I was, to suppose that he had no pleasure in the connection; at least, that he would have nothing to do with what he called *my metaphysics*, which were in truth my all. At this time, and under that impression, I was found out by that consummate

piece of scoundrelism the *Reverend* Mr. Curtis, who by a shilling license had so transmogrified himself from Mr. C., the Paternoster Row bookseller. I never liked the man, but his pretensions to religion were such—you should have the particulars from Mr. Gillman, who was present at the greater number of our interviews—that I literally did not *dare* disbelieve him and his solemn asseverations of zeal and friendship. Nay, I was shocked at Mr. Gillman for his avowal that he thought him a hypocrite. However, let that pass. I trusted him, and lost £1,100 *clear*, and was forced to borrow £150 in order to buy up my own books and half-copy-rights, a shock which has embarrassed me in debt (thank God, to one person only) even to this amount.”

The mischief did not end even with this serious loss. Again the reviewers—who are supposed to have murdered Keats—fell upon him. The ‘Sibylline Leaves’ only found an occasional word of acknowledgment in the Conservative organs; *Scott’s Magazine*, for instance, rated them far above the other products of the Lake school, praised their healthier tone, their wildness and freshness, their picturesque grouping, and ranked them among the finest creations of modern times. All the more reckless in abuse were the Liberal organs. The *Monthly Review* charged him with the style “of a sexton;” with outdoing even the Germans in tales of horror; with being full of platonic, metaphysical incomprehensibilities; they complained that his æsthetic lectures had had a pernicious effect, had held up the

golden age of Pope to contempt, and contributed more than any cause to "medievalise" the taste of his countrymen. The Radical *Examiner* went further still; declared the poems to be dishonest and affected, though not without genius; while of the 'Lay Sermons' they declared that "greater nonsense the author could not write, even though he were inspired expressly for the purpose." The *Edinburgh Review* compared the thoughts of the author to the sails of a wind-mill—rather a dangerous comparison for themselves, if they remembered 'Don Quixote.' But the severest stroke of all came, as usual, from a faithless friend. The fact that Coleridge had at one time been the most radical of them all, and that now he ventured to preach to his old allies, was taken by Hazlitt as a personal affront. "What right had the man to tell me lies, whether then or now!" Even Coleridge's review of "Bertram" had been answered by this incorrigible Unitarian with a hit at his exaggerated anti-Jacobinism. Finally, when the 'Lay Sermons' appeared, he entirely broke with the old and once honoured friend, and attacked his personal honour by accusing him of neglecting his family. Let us hear how Coleridge defended himself in a letter to Crabb Robinson—preserved in the Robinson papers.

"3rd December, 1817.

"MY DEAR SIR,—

"J. Gillman's, Esq., Highgate.

"I can readily imagine that your avocations are such as to permit you little leisure either of time or

thought to attend, as you would otherwise willingly do, to one who comes to you both as a lawyer and an adviser, but yet as a friend rather than a client. For twenty years successively I have endured without remonstrance a regular system of abuse and detraction as remorseless as unprovoked. But in opposition to whatever is best, and to all that is infirm and faulty in my mental and bodily disposition, I am compelled by positive experience, by the sudden and not to be mistaken influence on the sale of my works, to admit the doctrine of Cecil, Lord Burleigh, on which, in spite of all his stupendous labours, he never failed to act, that calumnies suffered to pass uncontradicted, are active poisons, never completely neutralised either by the innocence of the slandered individual, or even by their own extravagance or absurdity. For, as Hooker observes, what is wanting in the writer is made up for in the predisposition of the reader; and we both know and lament the degrading taste of the present public for personal gossip.

“Now my earnest request is that you will be so good as at your first leisure hour to peruse the article concerning your humble friend in the last Edinburgh Magazine, and give me, as to a friend, your private and confidential advice and opinion concerning the practicability and *expediency* of bringing to legal justice the publisher of the atrocious calumny therein contained. This work was undertaken on the *plan* of grossly abusing men of any name in the literary world, and then modestly informing the victim of the lie that any *reply*

would be received and inserted, as a sure means of forcing the Magazine into sale. It is mournful to know that it was far from being a bad speculation. I have even *heard* that the probable damages and other contingencies of action at law were taken into the calculation, just as bad debts are, &c. I need not say how many instances there are in which the person slandered could not defend himself and expose the groundlessness of the charge—nay, its absolute contrariety to the truth—without the most cruel indelicacy and injustice to the feelings and interests of others. But, in the present instance I can prove by positive evidence, by the written bargains with my booksellers, &c., that I have refused every offer, however convenient to myself, that did not leave two-thirds of the property secured to Mrs. Coleridge, and that I have given up all I have in the world to her—have continued to pay yearly thirty pounds to assure to her what, if I live to the year 1820, will be nearly £2000. That beyond my absolute necessities (in which I count those things that are indispensable to my being able to do anything) I have held myself accountable to her for every shilling; that Hartley is with me, with all his expenses paid, and now I am labouring hard to procure the means of having Derwent with me.

“Perhaps you may take a ride on some Sunday morning and let me see you; at all events let me have a line from you. For now is the time when I really *need* friends, for I work like a *slave* from morn to night, and receive as the reward less than a me-



chanic's wages, in position and gratitude. And finally, as if I were the most enviable darling of fortune, instead of being in body and estate one of the most pitiable, systematic slander in exact proportion to my fair claims on approbation, as far as my evident *objects* are concerned, from *all*; and instead of protection and encouragement from those who agree in the importance of the truths, enforced as the means of those objects, and in my ability to exhibit them. Believe me, my dear Sir, with every affectionate regard and respect, your obliged friend,

“S. T. COLERIDGE.”

Nothing came of the proposed appeal to law. Mr. Crabb Robinson knew the difficulties too well, and Coleridge was too passive. And as he had done when annoyed about the “*Essay on Method*,” so he now revenged himself by a satirical poem which he never finished or published. This essay, which Coleridge placed above all his other prose works, was “so be-deviled, interpolated, and topsy-turvied” by the publisher, that the author scarcely recognised his own views. And again we have his own account of this disagreeable affair in a hitherto unpublished letter (Brit. Mus. MS. Addit. 26111).

“MY DEAR MORGAN,—

. . . “Mr. Fenner promised me through Mr. Gillman that I should have a few copies of the

introduction to the 'Essay on the Science of Method,' from the Et Ceteri Club. If they mean openly to insult me, it is time, Morgan, that I should know it; and if they will not let me have a copy, at all events let the Rev. J. Curtis let me have my MSS. From 10 in the morning till 4 in the afternoon, with an hour only for exercise, I shall fag from to-morrow at the third volume of the 'Friend.' I hope to send off the whole by the first February. As I cannot starve, and yet cannot with ease to my own feelings engage in any work that would interfere with my day's work till the MS. of the *third volume of the 'Friend'* is out of my hands, I have been able to hit on no mode of reconciling the difficulties but by attempting *a course of Lectures*; of which I wish very much to talk with you. As soon as the 'Friend' is out I shall set tooth and nail to 'Puff and Slander.'\* If I publish it with my name, I shall prefix a chapter entitled 'Anticipation of a Chapter of my Private Life, from Jan. 1, 1816, to Jan. 1, 1818'—the early part of a larger work intended for posthumous publication, which I shall think proper to publish during my life. The lines I have as yet composed for 'Puff and Slander' are, in my own opinion, the most vigorous and harmonious I ever wrote. So pray let me see you as soon as possible, and hear from you at least immediately.

"My best love, and I would add 'happy new years to Mary and Charlotte,' if the word 'happy' did not

\* The satirical poem above-mentioned.

sound like Arabic, Diabolice, for 'wretched' out of my mouth. However, there is that within—thank God!—which is at peace. So may God bless you, and your sincere and faithful friend,

“S. T. COLERIDGE.

“Monday, 5th January, 1818.”

It was much against his will that, in consequence of these serious losses, Coleridge now proceeded to give another course of æsthetic lectures; for his heart was far more with religion than with poetry. “Woe is me! that at forty-six I am under the necessity of appearing as a lecturer, and obliged to regard every hour that I give to the *permanent*, whether as a poet or as a philosopher, an hour stolen from others, as well as from my own maintenance” (*Canterbury Magazine*, 1835). “With a broken heart” he begged Mr. Crabb Robinson to arrange for the necessary advertisements. On the 27th January, 1818, in the hall of the Philosophical Society he commenced his seventh course of lectures—the last he ever gave, for his intention to read soon after on the History of Philosophy (at Mr. Allsop's) came to nothing. On this occasion he gave fourteen lectures in regular succession. A numerous and cultivated audience sat before him, he saw careful notes taken, and was praised and well reported in the papers. But neither the applause nor the liberal receipts restored his old zest. In point of philosophical principle he chiefly repeated the views taught in his former lectures. What

was new were the definitions of the laughable, the satirical, the odd, and the humorous taken from Jean Paul, and, further, Schelling's idea of "absolute poesy." This last was to be traced according to the nature of things through the most various peoples, times, and intellectual departments; he therefore swept over and beyond Shakespeare and Milton, and treated of Chaucer and Petrarch, Dante and Cervantes, of tales of witchcraft and of the Arabian Nights. On the same grounds he was less anxious to analyse the characteristics of each poet. He sought rather to set Shakespeare free from the conditions of all time and place, and threw himself willingly into the domain of moral mysticism. When we follow these lectures in his daughter's edition, where the suggestions borrowed from Schelling are clearly followed, it is impossible to suppress a sense of weariness. They are rich in application, example, and psychological observation of an original kind. To the enthusiast they may be more pleasing and more intelligible than many of his former lectures; but to the biographer, whose first object it is to trace development of mind, they appear only as later blossoms of the same tree. A plan of working them up into three quarto volumes of 500 pages each was never carried out.

With the rest of his æsthetic activity I must make short work. An "Essay on Beauty," which appeared in 1818, probably on occasion of these lectures, may be characterised as an attempt to combine Kant's doctrine

and Herder's more sensual one with Schelling's principle of Identity. Once more after this did Coleridge treat the subject of art criticism, and in wider connection. This was on the 18th May, 1825, in his inaugural address, on occasion of his election as Fellow of the Royal Literary Society; the subject, the "Prometheus" of Æschylus. According to him Æschylus sought in this tragedy, allegorically, or rather tautegorically, to represent the secret principles of the Eleusinian mysteries, in order to counteract the corrupt influence of the superstitious State religion. The position of Fellow of this society entailed the obligation of delivering one lecture annually. Coleridge accepted this for the sake of the honorarium of one hundred guineas; but the attitude of the public on this first occasion was not encouraging. He reported it in a letter of the 20th May, 1825, to his nephew John (afterwards Judge Coleridge). "I inflicted the whole essay (an hour and twenty-five minutes) on the ears of the Royal Society of Literature with most remorseful sympathy with the audience, who could not possibly understand the tenth part. For let its merits be what they may, it was not a thing to read to, but to be read by."

Once more also did he address the same public on being unexpectedly summoned to deliver a lecture on "The Growth of the Individual Mind" (Gillman, p. 355). This was reported to have been a very brilliant extempore performance, but no record of its contents remains.

How much he now turned from the study of æsthetics to that of religion is evident from what we know of his intercourse with Tieck, who had come to London for a month, at the end of May 1817, to pursue his researches upon Shakespeare. The German author copied old plays in the British Museum, revelled in the performances of Kemble and Kean, and, thanks to the recommendations of Madame de Stael, was welcomed in London society. Coleridge, who had formed a high opinion of him in Rome, spent an evening with him, from ten to midnight. He listened in silence to Tieck's views of the course of Shakespeare's development, and of his relation to his contemporaries. The next day he said to him, "I think you right in many respects. For all that, I cannot adopt your views, because I will not adopt them; for they contradict all that we in England have hitherto thought and said of Shakespeare." He had evidently lost all power of receptivity on this subject. At the same time he requested, through Mr. Crabb Robinson, another visit from Tieck, in order to discuss the subject which now interested him most—that of Christian mysticism.

"20th June, 1817.

"Highgate.

"MY DEAR ROBINSON,—

"Surely I have not offended you by the familiarity of my letter? . . . The main object was to entreat you to exert your interest in arranging a *dies attica-germanica* at Highgate with Mr. Tieck; and as soon as

I know on what day I should be gratified I would write to Mr. Green to join the party, and I would endeavour to secure Mr. Frere. Should this weather continue, what think you of a *fête champêtre* in the Caen Wood, north of Highgate, Lord Mansfield's private grounds, if I should obtain permission? It is beyond compare the loveliest place so near London. I have only to add that it would grieve me sadly not to see Mr. Tieck again, and that any day would suit me except the 28th of this month, that being the anniversary of Mr. and Mrs. Gillman's marriage, when they have always a party of friends.

“Mr. Tieck mentioned an old German divine—was it Tauler? I find in Heinsius three works under this name. Would you be so good as to ask Mr. Tieck if this be the man? Likewise whether there were any followers of *Jacob Böhme* of any note or worth, about the same time? Whether he can mention any Spanish divines of mystic theology of any theosophical value? And lastly, and chiefly, whether I am likely to meet with and where any *ecdotes* or *anecdotes* of Giordano Bruno's sojourn in Germany? His Ash Wednesday ‘Table Talk’ contains a highly curious and interesting account of his adventures in London. Also whether there is any letter or other authority for his martyrdom at Rome in 1600 than the letter of Scioppius?

“I have only been able to procure Tieck's ‘William Lovell,’ and his friend Wackenröder's ‘Fantasies,’ edited separately by him. I have read a few pages of the

latter, and was much interested ; but somehow or other the *fiction* (as I supposed) of Raphael's nightly visitation, as recorded by Bramante, made me feel uncomfortable, as all engraftments on history do. What shall I say? In Klopstock's 'Messiah,' for instance, the *truths*, the glorified facts being connected with more than historic belief in the minds of men, the *fictions* come upon me like *lies*. . . .

"God bless you, and S. T. COLERIDGE."

This letter, the result of which is not known, shows the increasing sphere of his theological interest. From Schelling's mysticism, of which we hear nothing in this letter, he turned to the popular ideas. A number of expressions in the next few years indicate the same road. They are scribbled as glosses, not only in his own books but in those of his friends, who in truth were grateful for them. From this time his literary activity chiefly consisted in these fragments. Several volumes of them were published, and still there are masses unpublished in the British Museum. There, among others, we find a notice in Swedenborg's 'De Cultu et Amore Dei,' to the purport that Swedenborg was a philosophical genius, and that what was valuable in Schelling and his contemporaries had been in great measure anticipated by him. And Coleridge emphatically added the date of this remark—"22nd December, 1821" (printed in 'Theological and Political Glosses,' 1853). In the next year he began his first attacks



on his former oracle, Kant. He read Tennemann's 'Geschichte der Philosophie,' and was provoked (vol. i. p. 216) that this writer, "as a good Kantian, can look down '*ganz vornehm*' on the old religious realists, in the complacent possession of his own newly-acquired *Vernunftglaube* (reason-belief)—*i.e.*, belief in a God—under an acknowledged incapability of attaching to the word a single notion not demonstrably absurd; a *Vernunftglaube*, for which the believer professes himself unable to advance *ein einziges vernünftiges Wort!*" (one single reasonable word!). He maintained that Kant's critical methods were to be kept, but not his results. On the 17th February, 1824, in face of Kant's 'Vermischten Schriften,' he expressed in so many words his horror at a "*Begriff von Gott von uns selbst gemacht*" (a conception of God made by ourselves), and called it "an unsufficing performance, hardly to be distinguished from moral and modest atheism." At different times also, and in the severest language, he attacked Schelling; accused him of being a Jesuit; of multiplying objections only by way of literary sport; of not having brought forward a single instance where consciousness and unconsciousness, activity and passivity, were really combined; suggested that perhaps the positive Pole performed the miracles of the Old and New Testament! "Positive Pole is a positive sort of chaff that deals in negation and won't work, though we were before informed that he, or it, is the only Jack-of-all-work." On the other hand, he took every oppor-

tunity of lauding the fathers of the English Church. To them the old, much-tried man clung. In the whole stream of philosophy, from Plato to Hegel, he now saw only a confusion of hypotheses. It was not an abstract Christianity that he wanted, but a practical one.

From this last mood there sprung a work which has gained for him a great name in the history of English religion—the ‘Aids to Reflection’ (1825; 11th edition, 1866). The ‘Friend’ and the ‘Biographia Literaria’ aimed to be scientific treatises, and the ‘Lay Sermons’ had still a worldly air; but the ‘Aids to Reflection’ is an edifying book. It rests on the proposition that “Christianity is not a theory, or a learned speculation, but a life.” It contains hardly anything about Schelling, and of Kant little more than the distinction between the reason and the understanding, and that only sufficing to make philosophy the handmaid of the Church. Every Sunday one may hear from hundreds of pulpits, and every working day one may read in hundreds of tracts, “believe, in spite of reason,” or “believe because it is wise and useful to believe.” Coleridge’s call is to believe upon grounds—and those not external, but internal grounds. Let us not believe in Christianity because of the miracles, but, *vice versâ*, in the miracles because of Christianity. As he admits the competence of genius to be a law unto itself in matters of art, so he admits the same unlimited competence in the believer in matters of theology. He expressly takes the opposite side to the rationalistic

idea which since the expulsion of the Stuarts has reigned in the Church, reaching its highest point in Paley. He was just as dissatisfied with the pagan morality of the first half of the eighteenth century, as with "the watchmakers' scheme of prudence" in the second half. What he insists on is spiritual self-devotion—childlike, but not blind, as in the Anglican champions of the seventeenth century. These men are his real examples, and he delights to show from the works of Leighton and of John Smith similar ideas of the definition of the understanding as those by Kant. He accordingly follows their steps, in a particular part, on the doctrines of original sin, salvation, and baptism, in which it is not so much a question of dogma as of feeling. The more Coleridge advanced in life the more he suited his programme to the approximation of man—both heart and head—to the likeness of God.

The 'Aids to Reflection' created no immediate effect. The reviewers hung back, and the author complained for more than a year of the unprofitableness of his works. "I cannot and will not write for reviews, and what I write, the public will not read. . . . I live neither for nor in the world" (*Canterbury Magazine*). But the book took the deeper hold at last. The aphorisms are naturally put together and perceived; the work contains the religion of the many and the logic of the cultivated; and where logic fails, the poetic beauty of the language fills the void. James Rigg, James Martineau, and more recently John Tullock, have described the impression

the work made on the religious life of England, so that I may leave these facts to those excellent writers who have gone before me, and only shortly state the results.

In most instances the foundations of the influence of the 'Aids to Reflection' had been laid beforehand. Similar movements had come to the surface years before, both in England and Scotland. Erskine of Linlathen had treated the 'Internal Evidences of Revealed Religion,' and represented Christianity as no longer a question of dogmatic authority, but of experience and life. Two years later Whateley of Oriel College, Oxford, had come forward with a work on 'The Use and Abuse of Party Feeling in Religion.' He, his friend Arnold, and other members of the Oriel school had urged the substitution of a practical conception of the Christian spirit for the cold logic, the petty literalism, and the orthodox formality of the day. At the same time young Newman, at that time Fellow of Oriel, was beginning to work his way to that utter scepticism in regard to mere understanding which led later to his joining the Church of Rome. All these men would have accomplished much the same even had the 'Aids to Reflection' never appeared, but that work hastened and facilitated their task. They have owned as much in various ways. Arnold, though far from blind to the unsteadiness of Coleridge's thinking, still called him, on the strength of its results, the ablest man in England; and Cardinal Wiseman, who could least forgive his habit of uncontrolled inquiry and his passionate

resistance to Catholic Emancipation (Coleridge would sooner have given the Irish "Home Rule"), still openly and impartially praised him as the propagator of a "high philosophy." Still, direct adoption of characteristic propositions as between Coleridge and the German philosophers was not to be expected here. In England it was a free movement—a strong current—branching off in different directions, warming, animating and stimulating as it went.

At the same time there were also certain men of religious note who may be said to have emanated direct from Coleridge, and may be properly designated as his followers. Maurice, who, with Kingsley's strong help in word and deed, founded the Broad Church, was converted by the 'Aids to Reflection' from Unitarianism to the Anglican creed. He maintained that his understanding had first been cultivated by Coleridge. Like his teacher, he united inward faith and childlike self-surrender to God with aversion to outward confessions, and hoped that in time all sects and philosophies would unite in one large Church of Christian unity. He only kept clear of the everlasting abstractions of our friend at Highgate, and developed for himself a system of active philanthropy. Julius Hare, however, gave himself over more completely to the "great religious philosopher and poet." It was through him that the activity of Coleridge most directly benefited the Church. Indeed Coleridge and Hare together may be said to have overmuch influenced the youthful John Sterling, a delicate, amiable

and really poetic mind, but "a passive genius," as Jean Paul would have called him. Sterling came to Highgate, a freethinking idealist, but could never from that time shake off the personal charm of the "Ancient Mariner." At Coleridge's death he gave up his literary vocation and was induced to enter upon a clerical career, which, brief as it was, involved him in tragical self-contradictions; and shackled power, stunted achievements, wearing irritation, and an early death were the consequences. Something less of goodness would have been better for him.

Contradiction was not wanting. While Coleridge was engaged in writing his 'Aids to Reflection,' Thomas Carlyle, then twenty-nine years of age, came to London, full of earnest admiration for him, and with great expectations made his acquaintance. But the two were too much akin to learn from each other, and yet too alien to take to each other. They both fought against shallow enlightenment, conscious calculations and narrow-minded materialism, and both fetched their weapons by preference from Germany. But Carlyle was sceptical, and Coleridge believing. The one had just translated "Wilhelm Meister," and was full of enthusiasm for Goethe's harmonious and free modes of thought; the other turned from him, as from a modern heathen. The one came rough and unbending from his northern heather, and found a literary invalid. Both were prophets—the one the prophet of power, the other of fancy—and no beings in the world are so incompatible. Coleridge concealed his disappointment with his customary

gentleness ; Carlyle wrote his betrothed a description in which some remains of admiration and a vast amount of contempt are grotesquely mingled. This opinion was about as follows. A great genius, without any self-control, without any certain aim, without energy, without use (Froude, vol. i. p. 222). In his later reports, also, he continually returns to this melancholy contrast. He compares Coleridge at one time with a great ship, the mast, sails and rudder of which have rotted away, and now with a mass of precious spices in a state of decay. He would like to respect him, and at the same time he would like to toss him in a blanket. When, at a later time, he stood by the grave of Sterling, whom he had in vain endeavoured to set right, his recollection of Coleridge was still mixed with bitterness, and the (to him) canting biography which Hare drew up of the deceased goaded him into an angry passage of arms. He wrote a second *Life of Sterling* (1851), in order to show how "bottled moonshine" could affect what he called a fermenting young mind. "Coleridge, a warning for all of us," is the significant burden of his table of contents. The world meanwhile had found other wants and other ideals ; Coleridge had become antiquated, and Carlyle, in his stead, led the intellectual life of the nation. Half a century after a man has done his best, the shadow side of his ministry, as a rule, becomes the most conspicuous, and the new generation, satiated with that which he did for their fathers, turns against him. Carlyle has still in our days to meet this crisis.

On a second occasion Coleridge saw this shadow side of his labours with his own eyes.

Edward Irving, a Presbyterian preacher, and a youthful friend of Carlyle, was moved to London in 1822, and immediately became an object of public attention. With long black locks, a deep and powerful voice, with a solemn and peculiar action, and antiquated expressions, his whole appearance apostolic, combined with a slight and unconscious theatrical tinge, he stood before his congregation with all the ardour of a John the Baptist. A great disappointment in love, for he was attached to Carlyle's betrothed, had driven him to seek compensation for his ruined happiness in religious eccentricity. Like other Christian reformers, he wanted to restore the early times of Christianity. Basil Montague introduced him to Coleridge, who naturally opened his heart in long discourses to him. He succeeded in interesting the Presbyterian minister in the hierarchy and services of the English Church; and before the 'Aids to Reflection' had appeared, he indoctrinated him with its contents. Urged on by Coleridge, Irving determined to study German metaphysics! The stirring preacher now, for a time, became fuller of thought, laid aside his theatrical air, and publicly evinced his gratitude by dedicating to Coleridge his work on the Missionary Society as to the man "from whom I have learned more for my spiritual understanding of the Word of God, and of the right conception of the Christian Church, than from any other of my contemporaries."



But soon the scholar became more consistent than the teacher approved. Why all this philosophy, if only for the purpose of convincing man that he must believe! Accordingly, when Coleridge held forth on philosophical subjects, Irving was always observed to be inattentive and absent: but when he quoted Scripture or any well-known religious phrases, he again became his attentive and delighted hearer. And further, why should he not combat the despised prudence and scepticism of the eighteenth century still more boldly with the very Bible itself? Accordingly he accepted every word of the Bible as literally as a child does those of his mother. The reign of Christ on earth, as prophesied in Revelations, appeared to him to be due in one hundred years: it was time therefore to form a community worthy to welcome Him. For the first time Coleridge now suspected some mischief—his wits sharpened by the recollection of his own youthful experience: accordingly he sent him a kind warning through Mr. Basil Montague.

“1st February, 1826.

“MY DEAREST MONTAGUE,—

“I was truly grieved to hear from —— that Mr. Irving looked shockingly ill, and had preached *two hours*. He will surely shorten his life, and will find too late that he has been unjustifiably prodigal of rever-sionary property. He robs mankind of his future self. I confess *I do not understand our friend's late excursions into the prophecies of a sealed Book*, of which

no satisfactory proof has yet been given whether they have already been, or still remain to be fulfilled. *Cocceius*, the best and most spiritual of all our learned commentators, interprets the chapter on the millennium as of events already past. But as I do not understand, I do not judge; but am willing to believe that, as preached by Mr. Irving it will be to edification; though for myself I am not ashamed to say that a single chapter of St. Paul's Epistles or St. John's Gospel is of more value to me in light and in life, in love and in comfort, than the books of the Apocalypse, Daniel, and Zachariah, all put together. In fact I scarcely know what to make even of the second coming of our Lord. Is He not 'my Lord and my God'? Is there aught good in the soul, and He not a dweller there? I am aware of the necessity of a mid-course between Quakerism and a *merely historical* Christianity. But I dare not conceal my conviction that on certain points we may have clearer views of Christianity than some of the Apostles had. God bless you, and

“S. T. COLERIDGE.”

In clearer terms even than in this letter we find a marginal note in Luther's 'Table-Talk' lamenting Irving's "extravagances and presumptuous sayings." As his hint through Basil Montague had not answered, he took him openly to task—June 1826—for his reveries about the prophecies, and called him a "Bibliolator." Irving agreed with him, but still went his own way. Coleridge

himself felt his influence, discoursed in a more orthodox vein than ever, and wrote—12th April, 1827—in Irving's just published work on the 'Coming of the Messiah' (from the Spanish of Juan Josafa Ben Ezra) the following remark :—"Now so far, in all deep and concerning points which Mr. Irving has most ably maintained against the current dogma of both Churches—his own and ours—in all the great moments of his warfare, I am his fellow-combatant, and prepared to fight under his banner. Up to this time he and I are one. Shall we differ then respecting our Lord's kingly office? Scarcely, I trust. Or on Christ's second coming to possess His kingdom? I have no foreboding of dissent on this either. It is to the personal coming of Jesus and the re-creation of an earthly monarchy, an imperial theocracy under Jesus, as the visible head and sovereign, that my fear points. Fears that I shall find myself called on to withstand Irving, to attack his position, and despoil him of his faith? O, no! no! no! But that I may not be able to partake of it. There will be no resistance, but a yearning and a predisposition. If reason does not hold me back, my will will: At all events, Daniel and the Apocalypse shall not part us."

And some fifty pages further on, when Irving boasts that through the incarnation and sufferings of Christ, "Reason is set at nought, and her inability demonstrated to attain unto any part of the mystery of Divine Love," Coleridge broke out angrily, "This is the sort of sentence of too frequent recurrence in this discourse, to

which I so impatiently object. What is my friend's object in all this reasoning but to set forth the perfect and exalted *Reason* of this economy that sets reason at nought!!! What predilection can Irving have for the term Reason? what prejudice against understanding? that he should prefer the ambiguous, the almost sure-to-be-misconceived former, to the safe and wholly unobjectionable latter term. These passages always strike me as if his amanuensis (some pupil of the modern Calvinistic School, who had stolen into my friend's good opinion) had by a *pious* fraud interpolated what my friend was dictating with bits and scraps out of his own favourite divines, and that my friend in the ardour of preaching had read them straight forward, without adverting to their dissonance from his own style of thinking." The ghost of Kant stood between Coleridge and Irving, and the conflict of their principles was not long covered by their personal attachment. When Irving next appeared at Highgate, Coleridge stated all his objections unreservedly. He thought "to steady him," but he only "stunned him." Irving kept away, showed all his fanatic nature, and preached that the time for signs and wonders, and unknown tongues had come. Coleridge was helpless to restrain him. "He is a good man," he said—June 18th, 1828—to Crabb Robinson, "but his brain has been turned by the shoutings of the mob. I think him mad, literally mad." Irving came once more to Highgate—in 1831—after he had broken down the bridges behind him. Coleridge looked

at him with sorrowful admiration and loving displeasure, and pathetically lamented that such a man should throw himself away. But in vain. The gifted preacher was dismissed from the Scotch Church, and, worn out with excitement, he died on the 6th December, 1834, a few months after Coleridge. His sect still exists, and in an honoured and respected form.

It would be unjust to charge Coleridge in the first instance with responsibility towards Irving, as Carlyle has done with regard to Sterling. Mrs. Carlyle used to say, "If I had married Irving there would have been no tongues." Still, Coleridge took the loss of his pupil much to heart, and with a view to obviate any such unreasonable misinterpretation, he wrote his last theological treatise, 'Confessions of an Enquiring Spirit,' published in 1840 from his remains.

With all assertion of his faith, Coleridge had never given up the standards of Reason. He never said with Tertullian, "I believe in spite of reason," but with Kant, "Reason makes me believe where I know that I can know nothing." He attributed, therefore, no power of proof to the external evidences of Christianity, namely, to the miracles. "Dubious questioning," he says in his 'Aids to Reflection,' "is a much better evidence than that senseless deadness which most take for believing." "I believe Moses, I believe Paul ; but I believe in Christ." In contradiction to Irving, he was now first conscious of the distinction between blind acceptance and living conviction. Further materials for thought and an

appropriate form for a treatise on these points were furnished him by several German works. But most of all he derived from Lessing's 'Fragmente eines Un-  
genannten.' Coleridge had not only read these 'Fragments' thirty years before, but "year after year;" he wrote in his old age, on a fly-leaf of a volume of Lessing, "I have made a point of reperusing *Die kleinen Schriften* as master-pieces of style and argument." The 'Confessions' have something in common with these desultory instructions to a supposed literary friend.

He was quite aware that these 'Confessions' would find no favour with narrow, orthodox minds. "Our theologians," he says (p. 102), "seem to act in the spirit of fear, rather than in that of love." But he estimated Truth far too highly not to break a way to it through the wall of the Temple, wherever a chink betrayed a ray of light. He says in his 'Aids to Reflection,' "He who begins by loving Christianity better than Truth, will proceed by loving his own sect or Church better than Christianity, and end by loving himself better than all." He maintained his life long the deepest conviction that the Truth could only benefit both his own and every other mind. Without acknowledging this fundamental feature of his nature, which often came to light in a revolutionary form, neither his wonderful activity of mind nor his regrettable unsteadiness can be rightly judged. He never adhered to any particular views or party. As a boy, when fancying himself an atheist, he never relinquished the idea of a

Christian God, nor that of angels. When a Unitarian, he condemned his fellow-Unitarians for their rash interpretations of the Bible. Even in his most radical time he broke a lance in defence of Burke. So now, in spite of his Church principles and toryism, he was unprejudiced enough to see the failings of each, and to seek to remedy them. If he let his 'Confessions' remain for years in his desk, it was not from fear of any annoyance their publication would give him—for in that case he would either have burnt them, or not written them at all—but because he waited for a favourable constellation of religious conditions; also perhaps he thought the words would come with the greater weight from the lips of a dead man. In confidential letters, and in his marginal glosses, are found expressions that one might attribute to a Chartist, or to a Nonconformist. He denounced the disorders of the Court, pronounced an hereditary monarchy not to be absolutely necessary, and sympathised far more with the French Revolution than with the arbitrary Government that had preceded it. He was indignant when Southey called such a noble dissenter as John Bunyan "The King of the Tinkers." He differed slightly in some respects from the dogma of the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Sacrament, as held by the Anglican Church; picked holes in the Athanasian Creed, and in the form of Infant Baptism; blamed the illiberality of the Church in the seventeenth century, and adhered to Milton as much in his old age as he had done to Jeremy Taylor in

his youth. It was not his habit to go to church ; he spoke openly on the faults of the clergy, and of the unnatural creed of Hell-fire. His independent position in the midst of contending parties cost him, as he says at the beginning of his 'Confessions,' much happiness, and at all events the credit of being a useful man. Each party found him unreliable. It happened even that after the death of George IV. (1830) the hundred guineas, which he had derived annually since 1825 as Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, was withdrawn.

However, his activity was not confined to questions of the day. That want of continuity which makes us sceptical of all his achievements, taken singly, redounds perhaps to his greatest honour. For it was not a voluntary unsteadiness. He systematically stormed one fort after another, in order to penetrate into the citadel of truth, and never looked for a victory which he felt to be unattainable by man. He was never satisfied with himself—the mere attempt to express himself more clearly drove him further forwards—and even had it pleased God to give him the choice between Truth, and the restless Search for it, he would, like Lessing, have bent his knee modestly before the Search. "Father, give ; the pure Truth is only for Thee alone ! Not Truth itself, the possession of which a man has, or thinks he has, but the earnest effort to gain it, makes the worth of the man."

The last large prose work by Coleridge, 'On the



Constitution of the Church and State,' appeared in 1830, on occasion of the Catholic Emancipation, and forms a kind of continuation of the 'Lay Sermons.' It contains several historical errors. Niebuhr's severe criticism was also acknowledged by Arnold. It is however so far characteristic of the peculiarity of the writer, that it exhibits him at that extreme point of Anglican and Conservative opinion which meets the opposite extreme of his Pantisocratic free-thinking. Then he had desired to separate Church and State; now he is all for their union, but a union in which the Church should give up her dogmatic position and undertake the social education of the citizen, as proposed in his 'Lay Sermons'—in other words, become a great National Institution for the promotion of morality. Then he had thundered against the clergy; he now shows them the greatest respect. But he would include in this class all occupied with intellectual things—princes and medical men, mathematicians and musicians—so that the apparent contradiction proves to be merely a case of the altered use of a word. Then he condemned the subdued condition of Ireland; now he would oppose the admission of the Catholic Irish into Parliament, as being only half an emancipation, so long as the law does not place the Catholic subject on the same footing as the Protestant one. Coleridge wished for perfect equality of rights, on a pre-Reformation basis. With an air of system which is elsewhere due to the artistic manipulation of a clever biographer, he found his way back to his original starting-

point. Thus it was with no small pleasure that he caught himself expressing the same convictions, only more matured, which he had held in earlier times. He said of himself four weeks before his death, "It is wonderful to myself to think how infinitely more profound my views now are, and yet how much clearer they are withal. The circle is completing—the idea is coming round to, and to be, that of common-sense."

Among his smaller essays may be mentioned "The History and Jests of Maxilian, Satyrane's Cousin," published 1822, in *Blackwood's Magazine*. With a Jean Paul-like humour he describes how he had concealed his real pride under the disguise of *gaucherie* and absence of mind. This sketch is connected on the one hand with his portrait of himself in the "Tombless Epitaph," and on the other with Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus." Coleridge felt himself to be old, and looked gladly back at the road he had left behind him.

And finally there were a handful of small and mostly eccentric poems strewn over this latter period. They are unpretending, but noble in feeling and form—varied memories, with the light of autumn upon them. Like as to a glorious, far-off vision does he look back to the May of life, "when the joys of Friendship, Love and Liberty came down shower-like," but now feeling himself to be only

"Like some poor and nigh-related guest,  
That may not rudely be dismissed.  
Yet hath outstaid his welcome while,  
And tells the jest without the smile."

"Youth and Age" is the title of this poem. Bees and birds are stirring busily in spring-time about him, but he can no longer build or sing: his soul "is drowsed, as with a spell." "Work without Hope" is another. Ghosts of former love come back to him, and sad thoughts of an alienated friend, "like a rib of dry rot in the ship's stout side;" also sweet children, on whose tender heads the old man prayerfully lays his hand, and rising talents, on whom he invokes Love, Hope, and Patience; and noble women, whose anger he deprecates should he—Plato-like—deny them souls; "for what you are, you cannot possess." One of his most lively recollections of the luxuriant imagination of his boyhood was conjured up by the picture of an Italian landscape—the "Garden of Boccaccio"—which a friend gave him; then came scenes from the "Penseroso" and the "Allegro," as once in Cambridge, with "the city pomp of bright Florence—forests with sullen boars—the gods of Greece—the mythic forms of the Middle Ages—satyrs and winged saints—vestal maids between the ranks of the trim vines—and wild strains of the ancient scalds, all whirring strangely together." Miltonian contemplation also visits him, though now in the robe of Schelling's "Philosophie-Poesie." The possibility that Death might meet him in this rich labyrinth of pathetic recollections had no terror for Coleridge. His mind had lived beyond the confines of this world long before his bodily frame gave way. With significant allusion to the nightmare "Life in Death" in the "Ancient

Mariner," he composed on the 9th November, 1833, his own epitaph :

"Stop, Christian passer-by !—stop, child of God,  
And read with gentle breast. Beneath this sod  
A poet lies ; or that which once seemed he.  
O lift one thought in prayer for S. T. C. !  
Mercy, for Praise—to be forgiven, for fame,  
He asked and hoped, through Christ. Do thou the same."

In addition to the inflammatory pains in his joints and to the dyspepsia occasioned by opiates, he now suffered from an affection of the heart, which caused great physical distress. This suffering bent his figure, furrowed his face, and hindered his work. But his robust constitution long resisted. He survived the French July Revolution and the struggle for the Reform Bill ; he also survived Walter Scott and Goethe. Up to the last he pursued the literary and political occurrences of the day with keen interest, and was never tired of enunciating his favourite views. This is proved by his 'Table Talk,' which his nephew and son-in-law, Henry Nelson Coleridge, published in 1836. As time went on the distress of the breathing became so great that for the last thirteen months he spent seventeen hours every day walking up and down. His patience never failed, but he sometimes feared his mind would give way. He arranged all his worldly affairs—left his pictures to Mrs. Gillman, distributed books as keepsakes among his numerous relatives, ordered mourning rings for his most intimate friends, and then wished to be no further disturbed. In June 1834 Wordsworth paid him a visit, and found his

countenance beaming with cheerfulness ; the pains had spent themselves, and a marvellous peace had taken their place. He passed away a month later—on the 25th June, 1834, at 6 A.M., sixty-two years of age. With his last strength he commended the faithful nurse who had attended him to the Gillmans, and explained a portion of his philosophy to Mr. Green.

The post-mortem examination showed an abnormal enlargement of the heart, which pressed on the lungs on both sides. The heart was full of water ; the walls so thin that they broke as soon as touched. He was interred without pomp—his aversion to which was well known—in the church close by, attended only by his relatives and nearest friends. A letter he had written five days before, to a godchild, was read from the pulpit the Sunday after, to the edification of all. The grave was covered with a simple stone—shown to visitors by the clerk for thirty years, when a more befitting monument was erected in the chapel of the neighbouring school. An obelisk also was raised by the Gillmans to the memory of their beloved inmate.

Coleridge did not leave his family unprovided for ; his widow received £2600, which he had insured for her benefit. She died in 1845, and is buried in the churchyard at Keswick, close to the Southneys. Their son Hartley was most like the father in gifts and also in his negligent mode of life. He was fellow of a college at Oxford, but deprived on account of intemperate habits—a sentence which his father in vain endeavoured to

get reversed. He was especially cared for in the will. He died at Grasmere, fifty-two years of age, admired as a lyrical poet, and welcomed in the farm-houses around as a most cheerful and amusing companion. Derwent took orders in 1826, and became head of the Chelsea Training College of St. Mark's. He was afflicted with the same inflammatory pains as his father. I saw him myself in 1882, in Torquay—a venerable old man, full of Christian patience and etymological enthusiasm. Sara, a gifted woman, with beautiful eyes, was carefully educated by Southey, proved herself an excellent translator both of Latin and French, married in 1829 her cousin Henry Nelson Coleridge, and is chiefly known by her interesting fairy-tale, "Phantasmion."

Derwent, Sara, and Henry Nelson laboured gratefully to preserve the memory of the great man by fresh and annotated editions of his works, and by biographical notices of himself. And we are led to hope that Derwent's son—the only grandson surviving—will ere long open to the public hitherto undivulged family papers.

The warm attachment of his friends survived his death. Of this 'Crabb Robinson's Journal' gives many a touching proof. The Gillmans were quite heart-broken (see 'Caroline Fox's Journal'); Mr. Gillman sought to beguile his sorrow by a biography of his friend; while Mr. Green, his literary legatee, devoted his life to a work on 'Spiritual Philosophy,' founded on the teaching of the late S. T. Coleridge, published

after his death, 1865; a work which proves how little this more suggestive than conclusive teaching could be reduced to a system. Charles Lamb, the old school-fellow, was the most overpowered by the loss of his friend. He "could think of nothing but Coleridge." Even in society he would sigh and say, "Coleridge is dead." He followed him two years later.

The public, for the first time, became thoroughly aware after his death of the value of what they had lost. The first general edition of his poems and dramas (1828) had been succeeded by a second, without any alteration, in 1829. In 1832 a third edition appeared, greatly enlarged, and a fourth in 1836. The dates of the many succeeding editions are best found in the Catalogue of printed books in the British Museum. The fragments he left found willing publishers, volume after volume, and Coleridge's writings came gradually so much into request that Mr. Green had to defend himself publicly for not throwing the remaining papers—fragmentary and unconnected and full of repetition as they were—upon the market. The living prophet could starve; the dead one was idolised. The critics seemed to have only waited for his death to sound his praises. *Fraser's Magazine*, however, had enumerated his merits in the cause of philosophy in 1832, and the year after even praised his 'Biographia Literaria' as "a queer and pleasant book." In the year of his death a flood of similar articles appeared, the *Quarterly Review* triumphantly taking the lead; and in 1835 the *Edinburgh*

*Review* acknowledged that he had "great and noble aims, and a deep insight into the connection between the material and the spiritual world," and that he "perhaps wanted only steadiness and industry to have founded in England a new school of physiological science." Still more significant, from the totally opposite direction he pursued, was John Stuart Mill's tribute. He designated Coleridge as the most influential teacher of English youth in the years between 1820 and 1840; "as the great awakener of the spirit of philosophy within the bounds of traditional opinion; as the revolt of the human mind against the one-sidedness of the eighteenth century." He held his views to be erroneous, but his appearance on the world's stage not the less necessary, and his influence beneficial (*London and Westminster Review*, 1840). And finally, as in confirmation of this opinion, a bust of the poet was solemnly installed to his memory as the emancipator of the imagination, in Poets' Corner, Westminster Abbey, on the 7th May, 1885, imagination being, in Mr. Lowell's words, "an important factor, not only in the happiness, but in the destiny of mankind."

On the other hand, after his death, when he could no longer defend himself, the most serious accusations were brought against him. Even in September, 1834, De Quincey had charged him with plagiarism from various German poets and philosophers (*Tait's Magazine*). Although Julius Hare had sought to neutralise these assertions by recalling the well-known experiences of



Coleridge's forgetfulness (*British Magazine*, 1835), yet the charge was violently renewed by Professor Ferrier five years later (*Edinburgh Magazine*, 1840). It is the fact that many an unconfessed bit of translation will be found among his poems; that many a paragraph in the 'Biographia' is an impression struck off from Maass or Schelling, without sign of quotation; and that many a chapter from his Lectures is also an unacknowledged loan from Schelling; to say nothing of other and literally innumerable borrowings of a freer kind. Sir William Hamilton expressed his wrath the most severely of all, averring that Coleridge was simply a gross literary pirate, whose plunderings were only limited by his ignorance (edition of 'Reid's Philosophical Works,' p. 890).

Sara Coleridge and her husband were fully right in combating the low interpretation thus given to his borrowings, while at the same time they added to their number (Preface to 'Biographia,' 1847; Notes, Lect. 1849), and Freiligrath took the same line in the Tauchnitz edition. As regards his poetic translations, there is no doubt that mere carelessness was the cause; a fact which the restlessness of his life, outward and inward, readily explains. He passed, for instance, through Bristol; gave Cottle some verses to read, remarking incidentally that they were taken from a German source. Suddenly he found that the *Morning Post* wanted a contribution, and off went the poem to the printer. From that paper it subsequently passed into his collected poems, hastily put

together and not always supervised by himself, without any sign of quotation being appended. But as regards the translations from Maass and Schelling in the 'Biographia,' the first of the two is once mentioned, while Schelling is alluded to with even exaggerated modesty. "For readers in general, let whatever shall be found in this or any future work of mine that resembles the doctrines of my German predecessor—though contemporary—be wholly attributed to *him*; provided that the absence of distinct references to his books be not charged on me as ungenerous concealment, or intentional plagiarism" (chap. 9, end). He cannot, again, be made answerable for the absence of all acknowledgment towards Schlegel in the Lectures printed after his death. For the rest, though he was not the discoverer of his philosophical principles, yet he showed great independence in selecting, arranging, combining, explaining, and formulating them; and he never made a pretension to any higher service or praise. "I regard truth," he says expressly in his 'Biographia Literaria' (chap. 9), as a divine ventriloquist. I care not from whose mouth the sounds are supposed to proceed, if only the words be audible and intelligible." His openly announced aims were not so much to find anything new, as to give fresh life to the past, and forcibly bring home to his countrymen the views of foreigners of kindred spirit with himself. What indeed would become of the poet—of the expounder of scientific discoveries—of the journalist and the orator,

if every opinion had to be labelled with a certificate of origin, like the specimens in a collection of mineralogy ! From no one did Coleridge learn more than from Schelling, and no one would have had a greater right to complain ; instead of which, Schelling rejoiced over his English pupil, owning even his obligations to him in the 'Essay on Prometheus,' where Coleridge in one happy word, "tautegory," defined that distinction between mythology and allegory which Schelling had only reached in a roundabout way. Coleridge was a great eclectic, but no one who conscientiously weighs his expressions will call him a plagiarist.

If these views are just, a concise and final judgment as to the originality of the remarkable man who is the subject of this work, and of the additions he made to the intellectual treasures of his nation, will take the following forms :—As a theorist in philosophy, or more perhaps æsthetics and theosophy, it was not his forte to deduce laws directly from facts, or even to bring them into scientific relation with facts. He had not the objectivity of an investigator. But all the more keen was his eye for every kind of subjective observation, the more freely did he bring what he observed into eloquent accord with his own individual being and with the tendencies of the time, and all the richer was the warp with which he interwove the alien woof. He was a mighty educator of his countrymen, and full of devotion to this object. Undiscouraged by ill-success, he traversed the narrow, commercial, half-sceptical,

half-pietistic domestic prejudices of the English people of that time with a many-sided, inspiring, Hellenic-Germanic method of thought, which to this day offers the remedy worth taking to heart for many a social abuse. As a poet, also, he began by servile imitation; but so must all; for poetry is nowhere now a mere matter of invention. Directed both by foreign and home examples, he took Nature, after a fashion and later, for his model, but only to modulate her music with wonderful genius to his own key. In this region he is truly a creative spirit, and immortal. The poems written with his full powers may perhaps be compressed into twenty pages, but these, as Mr. Stopford Brooke has happily said, are worthy to be bound in pure gold. And richly fruitful as were his various writings, more fruitful still was his personality. His life was spent in that love for his fellow-creatures and in that platonic exaltation of mind that his works display. He discoursed like one who had authority, seraphically and ardently, equally without compulsion and without reserve; an enemy to all routine custom, an apostle in the service of harmonious thought. He seemed an embodiment of that genius of imagination whose gospel he preached in a wilderness of thorny, pedantic rules. Thus, through successive phases of his life he gradually gave utterance to the entire wealth of his mind; and of the many great works which he has left, the greatest is that of his own development.



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